First Published, November 1948

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The thanks and acknowledgements of the Editor and the Publishers are due to the *National Herald* for 'A Pleasant Companion' by P. K. Banerji; to the *Hindustan Times* for 'A Poor Man is Congress President' by N. V. Thadani; to the *Hindustan Standard* for 'A Faithful Soldier' by Anil K. Chanda; to the *Leader* for 'A Rare Intellectual' by P. D. Tandon; to the *Bombay Chronicle* for 'St. Paul of Gandhism' by C. K. Narayanaswami; and to the *Orient* for 'A Unique Personality' by L. M. Thapalyal.

PRINTED BY U. NARASIMHA MALLYA, PROPRIETOR, THE B.B.D. POWER PRESS, COTTONPET, BANGALORE CITY; AND PUBLISHED BY V. KULKARNI, HIND KITABS LTD., 261-263, HORNBY ROAD, BOMBAY

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

A FEW months ago, a unique figure in Indian politics came into great prominence. It was Acharya J. B. Kripalani. Unexpectedly, and despite opposition from certain responsible quarters, he became President of the Indian National Congress. It was quite a setback, even for a big man like Acharya Kripalani when he was excluded from the *Working Committee* by *Pandit Jawaharlal* Nehru in 1946, after twelve years of General Secretaryship of the All-India Congress Committee. He returned to Swaraj Bhawan to pack up and make room for the new General Secretaries. Kripalani became 'homeless', and he wandered about for a few months. I was one of those who most firmly believed, despite everything, that all that was a very temporary affair and that the Acharya would occupy his rightful place in the Congress organization. Hardly had a few months passed when we learnt that the new election for the presidentship of the Congress would take place and that the Acharya's name had been proposed by several provinces for the most honoured *gaddi*. He was unanimously elected President of the Congress. His election was the triumph of genuine merit, which had been ignored for some time, but could not be ignored for long. A poor man became President of the Congress. A grateful nation rewarded a faithful soldier. The nation honoured him, and his Master, Mahatma Gandhi, blessed him. He became the first citizen of the country.

I have great pleasure in presenting this little volume to the public. In these pages one will find intimate and interesting details about one of the greatest figures in contemporary politics. In these pages one will find how a poor, 'quarrelsome and intolerant' man rose to the highest eminence. In these pages are unfolded various aspects of a unique and colourful personality.

Acharya Kripalani refuses to adopt the tricks of 'successful' men, and always insists on being what he is, despite all criticism. During an election, candidates try to be sweet and compliant, but the Acharya went his usual way, even during the presidential election, at times, offending big people at the risk of losing their goodwill and support. One day a close friend of his said, 'For God's sake, stop being on the offensive unnecessarily until the election is over. You are very unwise.' Promptly, came the Acharya's reply: 'To hell with everything. I must be what I am. I will not sell myself for anything in the world.' This is the Acharya I like most.

I am greatly indebted to my dear and esteemed friends who promptly responded to my request and sent to me their valuable contributions. I am genuinely grateful to all who have kindly contributed to this volume. I am fully aware of the fact that the book suffers from certain limitations, but for all these I, alone, am responsible.

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A BELOVED VAGABOND

By SAROJINI NAIDU

CLOSE upon twenty-five years ago I visited Benares, eager to witness the mystic ceremony of the annual *Gangā Snān*. My host, the late and greatly beloved Babu Shiv Pershad Gupta, had arranged for me to spend the entire night in an open boat and offered me as an escort to take care of me, a tall, gaunt young man with the keen profile and eyes of a questing hawk and hair that seemed impervious to discipline. As we floated up and down the sacred waters of the Ganges watching the pilgrim crowds on the banks and listening to hymns from groups of pious musicians here and there, I was alternately diverted, stimulated and occasionally startled by my companion's conversation which, hour by hour, revealed to me an ironic humour, a restless vitality and energy, a brilliant mind and a non-conformist challenging spirit, instinctively and arrogantly in revolt against all oppressive convention or obsolete tradition retarding the complete expression of life. I sensed also, in this unusual young man, a deep hatred of political dependence, a deep longing for political emancipation, though he did not speak to me very fully then of such intimate and integral matters that were part of himself.

Gradually the mellow beauty of the moonlight melted into the faint rose and silver of approaching dawn. With

a myriad-throated ecstasy the uncounted pilgrims plunged into the cleansing and healing waters of spiritual absolution, crying *Gangă Mă ki Jai.* The age-old ritual of the Hindu faith was over. We said farewell to each other and set out, intent upon our own ways and our own affairs.

But it was ordained that our ways and our affairs should not be divided for long. For, in common with millions of our countrymen, we had heard a new prophet proclaim a novel and consoling gospel of redemption. We had listened to the brave trumpet call of a new deliverer who bade the defeated, the defenceless, the despairing among mankind to enlist under his splendid banner that bore the devise, 'Truth and Non-violence'. There was room and scope and welcome for all men and women, for the poor and the rich alike, for the learned and the illiterate, for youth in the pride of its strength, for the old, the halt, the blind, the dumb, the maimed, the cripple and the outcast. And so my erstwhile escort and I became fellow-soldiers in the legions of our incomparable Leader, Mahatma Gandhi, fighting for the freedom of our country with the irresistible weapon of Non-violence. The story of those many years of struggle is an epic story, stirring, inspiring, heart-breaking, tragic and triumphant, a story of heroic suffering and sacrifice largely anonymous, that neither sought nor won recognition or reward.

The battle is ended. The standard of India's independence is about to be unfurled in the ancient capital of Prithviraj. He who issues the plan of celebration to the people, as President of the Indian National Congress, is no other than the sharer of my moonlight vigil on the sacred Ganges, a quarter of a century ago.

A symposium of friendly tributes in honour of Acharya Kripalani is, I hear, in preparation. His distinguished and devoted wife Sucheta Devi has called upon me as one of his oldest friends and associates to add a brief page of appreciation.

I have, as is well known, a very warm and cordial regard for Acharya Kripalani. But it would take an abler pen than mine to make a just analysis or a proper synthesis of a nature and temperament, a character and personality so complex and sometimes so much apparently at variance with itself. Yet perhaps these very paradoxes combine to create the true human values of one who is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable figures in our national life. He is proverbially impulsive, impatient, wayward and unaccountable in his moods, and yet so sensitive, so responsive to affection and the least gesture of cordial good-will or understanding. Who can deny that the kindest and most generous heart hides behind his sardonic laughter and provocative speech? His finest qualities I find in his utter intellectual and moral integrity, his fierce unswerving loyalty to his personal convictions and ideals, above all in his almost rapturous devotion to Mahatma Gandhi's teachings, so alien to his original individual beliefs but now the breath of his being. Who can ever forget his most moving concluding speech at the Meerut Congress when he made his superb confession of faith and traced the process of his conversion from the doctrine of terrorism to the transfiguring gospel of Non-violence and Love? That speech is in itself a perfect autobiography and an enduring memorial of a soul that has passed from turmoil to an inner serenity of realization.

AN OLD COMRADE

By RAJENDRA PRASAD

I BECAME acquainted with Acharya Kripalani soon after the first World War started and I have been intimately associated with him in public work for more than thirty years. We worked together for the first time in Champaran in 1917 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and ever since then we have been co-workers in the service of the country. It has not been a mere coincidence but a certain affinity in our line of thought and action which has brought us near each other. We have both been inspired by Gandhiji's teachings and both have aspired to work in the spirit of those teachings. We both have faith in the fundamentals of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. Acharya Kripalani adopted Non-violence with deliberation and conviction after having flirted with other lines of thought. I took to it almost instinctively. But both of us have held fast to it. The Constructive Programme on which Mahatma Gandhi has laid so much stress has attracted both of us; we have both been deeply interested and intimately associated in the field of national education and in the revival and spread of charkha and khadi.

Acharya Kripalani was a Professor, at first in a Bihar college and subsequently in the Benares Hindu University. When Mahatma Gandhiji started his work in Champaran, Kripalaniji gave up his professorship and joined

him and worked with him all the time that he was there. When Gandhiji started the Non-co-operation Movement, Kripalaniji gave up his professorship in the Hindu University and started, with the help of his young pupils, the 'Gandhi Ashram' which became the centre and hub round which village work in general and khadi work in particular has grown and spread out in the United Provinces and elsewhere. It is in the organization of this Ashram and its work that his great gift of inspiring young men and settling them in constructive work as well as his powers of organization first attracted public notice. The reputation of the Ashram has grown with its years and today it stands as an example of constructive effort which has achieved success. From the privacy of this kind of constructive work, he was dragged into the tumble of political discussion and organization and became the Secretary of the Congress, which office he held with credit for about twelve successive years. An incisive and impressive speaker, his speeches are listened to with attention and not the least of their quality is the touch of humour with which they are interspersed. He has acquired a place as an expounder of the Gandhian Way of life and his contributions to the literature on the subject are remarkable for the lucidity of their style and the incisiveness of their argument. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that he should be called upon to occupy the Presidential chair of the Congress and that at a time which has proved in many ways to be most decisive in the history of the Congress and the country. It is during his Presidentship that the country attains liberty and is called upon to take up the responsibility of running its

own Government. To him it is given to guide it in its early days of a new-found freedom. May he live long to give it his best as he has done all his life in the past !

A FORMIDABLE CONTROVERSIALIST

By K. RAMA RAO

ACHARYA Kripalani's Presidentship of the Congress has been a significant event in recent Congress history, and it might prove more significant in the light of present happenings and future developments. The election came as the crown and glory of long and useful service to the Congress in manifold ways. The wonder is that there should have been so much secret opposition to it at all. I think there should be a decent healthy ordinance that no one should be President of the Congress more than once. The field is vast, the workers are many, the honour is great and it should go to him who deserves it on the strength of his record of public work. It should, moreover, be remembered that, however great a Congress leader may be, he is not greater than that organization. The time has gone by when one could say that a person's name, reputation and eminence would be an acquisition to the Congress and he might as well be made President once, twice, thrice.

This takes me to the next point. There should be no spirit of oligarchy, high-priesthood, Shankaracharyaism in the Congress. A democratic institution can have but little use for a College of Cardinals. The evil spirit expressed itself painfully, but glaringly at the time of the Tripuri Congress, with disastrous results, as we now know. There

is an unfortunate tendency just now to exaggerate the importance of the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly. The presence of several eminent Congress leaders in the Interim Government betokens a diminution of the importance of the Congress Working Committee. It shall not be so. The Congress Cabinet must be superior to the Interim Government, for it is the top and head of the parent organization. The President of the Congress and his colleagues must be consulted on every major issue of policy and action that may be launched by Congressmen in the Government. The country will stand no 'superior' administrative excuses, constitutional necessities, political exigencies. The correct position must be reiterated that the parent body is the supreme originating authority and its Cabinet the supreme directing authority. According to report, there is a definite tendency not to assign the Congress President and his Executive the position due to them.

It should be remembered all the time that if the Congress is in office, it is there by invitation, may be compulsory invitation—an invitation, that is to say, compelled by the consolidated front and victorious re-emergence of the greatest political organization of any subject country in the world. The Interim Government will lose strength and popular appeal if it is not the mouthpiece and spokesman of the Congress. It is the right of the President to insist upon this aspect of present-day developments.

There is talk of the next struggle. That will succeed only if a popular basis is constructed for it by the integration of Government policies with popular thought.

It would be unfortunate if some leaders casually or consciously entered into some doubtful commitments and then attempted to stampede the Congress into putting its seal of approval on such commitments. Surrender we shall not to the extravagant demands of the Muslim League; neither shall we be cajoled and deceived into acceptance of British concoctions the composition of which varies from time to time to suit the delicate lining of the Muslim League stomach. This is a time when we should not be tender; this is a time when we should be wise.

One would like to know in this connexion how far Congress leadership appreciates the profoundly patriotic attitude of the Congress Socialist Party in that it will not think in terms of division of ranks so long as the struggle with Britain has not been concluded. The self-restraint of the Party is, indeed, commendable, even if at times its claims and pretensions appear to be a little exaggerated.

It is a stupid thing that, because one is inclined to be unsparing in criticism of excesses and firm on reiteration of fundamentals, one should be charged with communal bias. It has been stated that Acharya Kripalani suffers from communal bias, that he is pro-Hindu, that, at any rate, he is anti-Muslim. The charge comes with disgraceful vehemence, as it appears to have been inspired by a group of Hindus in the Congress who, if they are mischievous, are also inclined to ostentatious impartiality and freedom from any such 'bias'. It seems to have become a criminal offence these days to be plain and blunt and to lay blame at the door where it is due. This fashion must have its limits. If Kripalani spoke strongly about Noakhali, it was on the basis of unimp[illegible]

Would it have served the cause of truth if he had contented himself with uttering a few words of mealy-mouthed hypocrisy in the name of communal peace? Perhaps, he would have been acclaimed by these cosmopolitan coteries if he had said that everything was wrong with the Hindus of Calcutta and Noakhali, and instead of protesting and weeping, they should have kept quiet for the sake of Indian nationalism. Some of them would no doubt justify the excesses committed by the Bihar Government in the name of law and order. I pity the Bihar Government, and I praise the frankness of the Noakhali exposures.

I know Acharya Kripalani, who is plain, blunt and outspoken and who commands a penetrating pen and wields a flashing tongue, will put down the pseudo-nationalists and pusillanimous anti-communalists, so called, as often as occasion demands. I have no doubt, that he, more than any one in the Congress, today represents the mind of the masses clearly and authentically. He is a formidable controversialist when he is aroused, and he should hit hard those, however great, who deviate from the path of political rectitude. It is a strange irony of the situation that the Congress should today be on guard against sickly sentimentalists and ready defeatists in its own camp.

THE KRIPALANI WAY

By M. CHALAPATHI RAU

IN the summer of 1938, when nothing seemed to happen, Kripalani was living luxuriously on the reputation of being the Bernard Shaw of the Congress. It was not an entirely enviable reputation, for it was derivative and it did not ring true, for the Irish wit cannot be duplicated. In the whole world there could not be even a carbon copy of Shaw, a great dramatist, a great, if savage, satirist, and to me the representative man of letters in the English language. Kripalani did not then sport a beard, as he did for a time later, though a beard might have given him the Mephistophelian look, if not the Mephistophelian reputation, of Shaw. But in the drawing rooms of Allahabad, where civilization seemed to begin and end in those days, samples of the Congress Secretary's wit were being passed about second-hand. I looked on it as a case of alleged brilliance, but, as in all such reputations, I was to find later that there was a reflection of the truth.

It is not the Kripalani way to enjoy a false reputation, but the reality quite frightened me. It is not a personality which charms you. No other Congress politician has used his tongue as a lash so much as he has done. He says the oddest thing with that Voltairean, almost vulturish, mouth and a merry twinkle of the eyes is all that you get of an indication of humanity. For years I avoided that

lash thinking that a retort might seem discourteous to a man whose ascetic bearing proclaimed sacrifice and devotion to duty. Even humility does not appease him, for the two times I approached him in the intellectual, at least a non-political, way he used his wit for the first time rather unscrupulously and for the second time with little comprehension. That is the Kripalani way, reaching its little acme of local perfection in the merciless miniature pen-portraits of his colleagues of the Working Committee. The man is singularly free from pomp and humbug. But has he any asset except that mystifying, vehement eloquence which is a little impatient of facts, particularly in the field of foreign affairs, and that loyalty to the Congress, which might be the kind of adhesion some Congressmen cannot but affect, but for a rare intellectual instinct?

To me Kripalani stands for *The Gandhian Way*, that little classic of comprehension in which he emerges as the Clausewitz on Non-violence. It is not Gandhism, for Kripalani deprecates any such systematization of a way of life, an attitude, a transcendental groping, a growing faith which is all that he claims for his master's teachings. But the Savonarola-like figure, who for all we know likes good food and other little luxuries of life, makes of it a system and a strategy. I would say that Kripalani is the best commentator on Gandhiji. His is the dialectical approach. He makes Satyagraha an organized code of military warfare, Non-violence a philosophic system to which there is no adequate alternative. There is much scoffing in the book, a disregard for the non-Gandhian approach, even a blissful ignorance of Marxism, which

might make a Socialist say that the writer puts the most reactionary sentiments in a revolutionary form. But unless Gandhi's colossal writings are studied with the comprehension they deserve, Kripalani's thesis remains a satisfying exposition. He extends the amalgam of politics and ethics which is Gandhi's teaching into practical politics, and offers a complete catechism. *The Gandhian Way* explains both Gandhi and Kripalani. Without it, he seems a Congress buccaneer fighting his lonely way and babbling a strange philosophy. The Bohemian includes a system in himself and, if not always brilliant, it may be that profound faith in the greatest man of the age coruscates through the rough exterior and, with that touch of unique cynicism, makes him a disciple loved by his master, but a lash and a terror to others. There is only one Kripalani.

A COMBINATION OF OPPOSITES

By B. V. KESKAR

ACHARYA Kripalani, the President of the Indian National Congress, can in many ways be called the Mephistopheles of the Congress world. He is a combination of opposites in character, a combination very rarely found.

He has a sardonic humour which makes fun of men, women and things in general. He expresses his want of esteem, for men and things, in a satirical style which can be intensely biting and devastating. But with all this mocking and satyr-like outlook, he is a devoted follower of one of the gentlest and most affectionate of men.

I cannot imagine two men more dissimilar—I would say to some extent contradictory—in nature and outlook than Gandhiji and Acharya Kripalani. Gandhiji is patient, gentle and loving. Acharya Kripalani is impatient, irritable and explosive. Gandhiji is the soul of courtesy and good manners. Acharya Kripalani scorns such useless things and forceful invective comes easy to him. So much so that those of us who know him well from 1921 used to call him humorously—and affectionately—'Durvasa', after the great rishi of Hindu mythology, famous for his fiery temper. I am glad to note that Acharyaji has toned down and mellowed considerably during the last few years and especially since the august mantle of Presidentship fell on his shoulders. Even Gandhiji was afraid of his

temper and plain speaking and used to refer jokingly to the 'terror' he had of 'the Professor'. Gandhiji believes in the ultimate goodness of human nature. Acharya Kripalani does not think much of human nature or men. That is why, I think, he can be called—in a modified way—the Mephistopheles of the Congress world. His austere and sharp profile and his vein of mocking humour add to this impression. He makes no secret of his want of faith in human nature; at the same time he has complete faith in the sage of Sevagram.

How comes it that he is the devoted and personal follower of Gandhiji? Leaving aside the identity of the political or social views of both, it is probable that Acharya Kripalani, conscious of his own tendencies, found an added attraction in the very dissimilarity of Gandhiji's nature. In a very unpromising and cynical world, he found one man who was the very antithesis of the cynic or the pessimist. Gandhiji completely bowled him over. At last he found a person whom he could utterly trust. I verily believe that in spite of his cynicism and poor opinion of the world in general, it is his belief in Gandhiji that buoys him up and serves as a refuge from the prevalent gloomy and depressing atmosphere. Gandhiji is his sheet-anchor.

I have drawn attention to what appears to me to be the most striking and characteristic trait of his nature. Other and more eloquent and able friends will describe more effectively those outstanding qualities which have brought him to such eminence. His sacrifice and self-abnegation, his keen and piercing intellect and his single-minded devotion to the national cause marked him out

as one of our most eminent men. He is, if anything, a Fakir who has no other aim in life but serving the country and humanity.

I shall refer in passing to another significant circumstance regarding Acharyaji. He is one of the few leaders of our country who belong to the ordinary middle class. He has the ordinary man's outlook on life. The majority of our leaders come from or belong to the upper middle class, from well-to-do families, some even aristocratic in origin and outlook. There is a world of difference between their understanding and culture and that of the common literate person. They are not able to sense the joys and sorrows of the ordinary citizen. Kripalaniji feels like other ordinary educated men and I hope this really indicates the emergence of the common man into prominence and ultimately into leadership.

ACHARYA KRIPALANI

By SADIKALI

IT is natural for friends to ask me to write something about Acharya Kripalani. My association with him has been long and intimate and has given me unequalled opportunities of knowing him and the organization which he controlled for about 11 years in his capacity as the General Secretary of the Congress. Reluctant as I am to meet the wish of friends for more reasons than one, I should, however, take this opportunity of paying my tribute to one on whom the country has conferred the greatest honour in its gift.

Acharya Kripalani is a familiar figure in the public life of our country. His physical appearance has a distinctive individuality about it. It arrests attention. It is by no means a handsome face though I have heard a contrary opinion expressed in strong terms by competent connoisseurs of masculine beauty. He has short eyes, thin lips but a prominent nose and a broad forehead. His long brown hair easily marks him out both in the company of the elect and in a heterogeneous crowd.

Does his face mirror the inner man? I do not think a person who sees him for the first time can draw any inferences about him which bear any resemblance to truth. The face, with its rough, irregular features, its careless smile, its almost insulting indiffer-

around it is no proper guide to the understanding of its owner.

In the Congress organization we have all kinds of men,—politicians, poets, philosophers, professors, writers, doctors, lawyers. Being a political organization it should attract certain categories of persons and no other. But the conditions obtaining in our country and the objectives for which it struggles and suffers make the Congress draw into its fold a considerable variety of persons. Is Acharya Kripalani to be classed among politicians? Opinions will differ. Ask him and he will probably say he is no politician. But if by 'politician' you mean one who has a good grasp of the political problems facing our country, or for that matter the world, Acharya Kripalani would rank high among politicians. His contributions to the press have won wide-spread appreciation. They cover a large range of subjects. They are distinguished by lucidity of treatment and felicity of expression. In expounding a point of view he has the opponent's case before him and deals with it in all its fullness and intricacy. The opponent finds it hard to answer back. Besides being a good writer, Acharya Kripalani is a very effective speaker. In some of his speeches he reaches heights of eloquence which even the most learned among the audience cannot help admiring and enjoying.

He is no master of the English language and yet he wields it with considerable effect both in his speeches and writings. He is proud of his Hindustani. It is bad Urdu and worse Hindi and yet he makes this hotchpotch very palatable to his audiences by throwing into it the salt of his irresistible humour. It is his Hindustani with all its

mistakes and oddities that he considers the authentic *lingua franca* of India. It has, according to him, a far greater appeal than the polished, sonorous Urdu of Maulana Azad or the Sanskritized Hindi cultivated in Benares.

The Acharya is no mere writer and speaker. He has a record of solid constructive work which by itself should lend distinction to a man's life. He is not a constructive worker wholly confined to constructive work and detached from the battles for freedom which the country has waged from time to time and which called from her sons and daughters for courage, intrepidity, resourcefulness, and great capacity for suffering and sacrifice. He showed all these qualities in an abundant measure whenever the call came and freedom's battle was launched.

Acharya Kripalani is all this, a writer, a speaker, a constructive worker, a fighter—all of a high order. And yet, is he a successful politician? We all have our temperament, our bent of nature. No amount of free will can make us change it in a substantial measure. It is this bent which colours our outlook, determines our activities, shapes the contours of our every-day life, gives us our friends and foes, generates our likes and dislikes. Now, what is the principal twist of Acharya's nature? It is a twist which we associate with individualists, philosophers, recluses. This twist does not easily tolerate compromises. Give and take is not its habit. It relies on itself for all the satisfactions that life has to offer. Mixing in a crowd goes ill with it. Now, politics as it is understood and practised is little else than compromise, give and take and considerable mixing with our kind. There is nothing wrong with this politics. Social life, to be healthy, sane and balanced

has to be based on compromises and adjustments between various and conflicting temperaments. Predominance of any element of human nature or bent of mind or set of ideas exposes the social order to grave risks and a constant threat of disintegration and chaos. But politics is more than this healthy and necessary compromise and adjustment. Politics is commonly supposed to be the last refuge of an unmentionable species of human-kind. The evil in our nature finds in it an ample and fruitful field for its operations. A sensitive and refined nature recoils from contact with it. There is so much unworthy ambition here, so much push and jostle, such vulgarity and low flattery, such degrading tactics to encompass selfish, personal ends that no man with a soul to save can stand long contact with it without considerable injury. Politics in India, however, in several of its aspects, is of a different order. There is considerable idealism in it. This idealism is the fruit of the high objectives of the Congress. These objectives cannot be achieved except through means which call for the exercise of the noble and the heroic in us. The Congress has produced a long succession of exemplars of this idealism. It is this which draws into its fold the highest and the noblest in the land.

Kripalani's is a refined and sensitive nature. It feels out of sorts in the rough and tumble of politics. He lacks the drive of ambition to give him an excuse for making the kind of compromises which politicians practise for achieving personal success. He is, therefore, a lonely gure in politics. He belongs to no group. He is wedded nly to certain principles and doctrines and objectives. If ıe prizes politics has to offer are to be bought at the cost

of these principles he will have none of them. He is rich enough in himself to do without these prizes. It is not politics as commonly understood and practised which has brought him the honour of Congress presidentship.

Virtues we like and admire are numerous. It is not given to one man to possess all these virtues or even a considerable number of them. Good men may be fools and simpletons, and intelligent men scoundrels. You may have some rare men, born once in several centuries, who combine different and even contradictory virtues and can successfully react to situations of a considerable variety. Their appeal to mankind is wide and eternal. Short of them we have men of the hour. Churchill may have no big job to do today but the England of the war years needed him and made him her unquestioned leader because he had in him the qualities which England, in a critical hour of her national existence, needed. For some decades past, the Indian people have given their supreme respect and homage to those who have distinguished themselves,—to put it roughly and a little inaccurately—not for qualities of the head but for those of the heart. There is enough intelligence in the country but mere intelligence is not going to be our salvation. We need men, honest, selfless, and dedicated to the service of the vast Indian people who, for various reasons, find themselves in a pathetic plight today. Acharya Kripalani can boast of a fine intelligence. He has great wit and penetration. All this is good but that is not the principal reason why the country has elevated him to the presidential *gaddi*. It is his incorruptible character, his tenacity, his firm loyalty to causes he has espoused and cheerful willingness to

court what suffering this espousal may entail. It is these qualities which have won him the esteem and regard of his countrymen.

It is said of him that he has a bad temper. It is perfectly true. But this does not touch the fundamental man. Pandit Jawaharlal has perhaps a worse temper and loses it more often but he continues to be the idol of the nation. Good temper or bad temper is not of the essence. We come across in life persons who have a perfect control of their temper but whom it is difficult to beat in cold-blooded villainy. It is good to have a little temper and spend it on friends and foes with complete impartiality.

There are no two opinions either among his friends or his opponents that the Acharya is a frank and straightforward person. He calls a spade a spade. This is bad politics but there it is. You know exactly where you stand with regard to him. He is not fickle in his loves or hates. He is a quick judge of men. When once he trusts a man he trusts him to the fullest extent and leaves him ample scope for the exercise of his initiative. People under him have an opportunity to grow to the full height of their stature.

Acharya Kripalani is steeped in ancient Indian thought. He has a vivid appreciation of its width, depth and height. The key to the solution of the problems that perplex the modern age he finds in the wisdom of the ancients who, according to him, are more modern than moderns. This explains his passionate advocacy of Gandhiji's ideas. He is however no Gandhi-ite. He brings an independent mind to bear on all the problems that come up before him and reaches his own conclusions.

A friend, after a good talk with him, is apt to come away with the impression that, in meeting him, he has met a great cynic. This cynicism perhaps comes naturally to honest souls who strive hard to realize some ideals, improve this world of ours, do their duty towards their fellow-men and yet find man fundamentally unimprovable. Here and there man may reach great moral and spiritual heights but man in the mass remains a child, fickle, changeful and stupid. But this child has to be tackled by those who have reached adulthood, intellectual, moral and spiritual. The great, ancient Indian child (Indian people) is now in the keeping of one who understands it well and who will, let us hope, make himself docile to its ministrations.

THE RASHTRAPATI

By KRISHNA KRIPALANI

FORTUNE is fickle, and nowhere more so than in politics. In July 1946 friends came to sympathize with Acharya Kripalani for what seemed then a public discomfiture. He had ceased to be the General Secretary of the Congress, which post he had held for twelve consecutive years, and he had not been considered useful or important enough to be retained as a member of the Working Committee. His political career seemed suddenly to have come to an end. Those who feared his aggressive advocacy of Gandhian ideology thought his exit a good riddance. The Socialist weekly, *Janata*, chuckled over the fact in its usual, cheeky, adolescent manner. But Fortune, the great master of irony, turned the wheel and within four months the Congress electorate conferred on the erstwhile outcast the highest honour the nation could give. Acharya Kripalani was elected President of the 54th session of the Indian National Congress—without a contest. The election was all the more noteworthy inasmuch as Gandhiji and the Working Committee, contrary to practice, refrained from guiding the nation in the choice of the President and allowed the electorate full freedom to exercise its vote.

It was appropriate that the new Rashtrapati was called upon to preside over the Meerut session of the Congress

GANDHIJI, WITH MAULANA AZAD AND ACHARYA

for it was in Meerut that he had founded the Gandhi Ashram which is a living monument of his service of the masses. Many people who have heard him speak or read his writings look upon him as only a theoretical exponent of the Gandhian Way. They do not know that he was in the field long before he came on the platform and that for years he was content to work in obscurity carrying out Gandhiji's Constructive Programme in the villages. He served a long and arduous apprenticeship before he came into the limelight. And today if he is proud of anything it is of that. The organization that he has built up is one of the foremost of its kind in India and has a network of centres and branches all over the United Provinces and Delhi. It provides employment to thousands of villagers and maintains hundreds of whole-time workers. If it does not make enough noise in the political world, it is because Acharya Kripalani, true to his master's teaching, has sedulously avoided exploiting his organization's service in the villages for political and private ends. Not many politicians would have resisted such a temptation.

In fact, he lacks the temperament of a successful politician. He is devoid of ambition and is ill-versed in the art of using his fellow-men as pawns in a game. Though he has a shrewd judgement and easily sees through cant and humbug in others, he does not know how to use the power which this knowledge gives him. Rather he turns it into a weakness by freely expressing his estimate of men and affairs in witty and pungent phrases, which, though they sound amusing and clever, are not likely to make him popular in a world where heroes like to hide their feet of clay. A successful politician must cultivate the virtues of

both a general in the field and of a popular star on the stage. Like the one he must know how to take advantage of the weakness in the enemy's defences and like the other he must know how to strike effective poses and hold the eye. He must have something of a Shivaji and something of a Kananbala. Kripalani has neither the one nor the other. He lacks the will to power and the necessary combination of ruthlessness and cunning. These are seriou defects in a political leader. No wonder he does not com mand the popularity or power which his long record o selfless service, his unblemished character and his brillian intellectual gifts might otherwise have earned him.

Though he is today the titular head of the Congress h is by no means the power behind it. His election to th present high office is not a measure of the power he wield in the Congress organization. He is neither a popula idol nor a party boss. He wields neither glamour no power. He has risen from the ranks by sheer merit o service and ability, unaided by such extraneous influence as family, wealth or the patronage of the powerful, whic have helped build the career of many an eminent politi cian. He has not even had the backing of his provinc which, in a democratic organization like the Congress, i so potent a factor. His passport to eminence is the recog nition by Congressmen of his long and selfless service o the nation and his devotion to the Gandhian ideology.

Jiwatram Bhagwandas Kripalani was born in 1888 i Hyderabad (Sind) in a middle-class family of what ar known as Amils. This small community of Hindu Kshat tryas scattered in the different towns of Sind have com to be known as Amils or Dewans because at one time the

seem to have been the only educated community in Sind and therefore enjoyed a virtual monopoly of administrative employment both under the Muslim rulers and till recently under the British. Of them the Amils of Hyderabad formed the most exclusive and snobbish class. They are essentially and absolutely bourgeois, with all the virtues and vices of this class addicted to a petty bureaucratic tradition. They are a self-assertive and self-complacent community of intelligent men who dread originality, of educated men who hold learning in little esteem, of respectable men who do not waste time in mere cultural pursuits. They are smart and sensible but neither subtle nor sensitive, bold but not brave, active but not adventurous. In such a community a person like Acharya Kripalani would naturally seem a freak. And so he is. It is not surprising that he is least appreciated by the people of his own community and province. It was a sound instinct which made him a voluntary exile at the very outset of his career, and found him both honour and happiness outside his province.

And yet he was not such a freak in his own family. One of his brothers had early renounced the world and turned a Sanyasi. Two other brothers denounced their religion and embraced Islam. Their children are devout Muslims and staunch Leaguers. Nevertheless they are fond of their uncle, who is even more fond of them. In 1945 when he was released from Karachi Prison, his Muslim niece came to see him. As he embraced her, he laughed and said, 'Here we are, two nations in one family.' His father was a man of stern disposition whose irascible temper was dreaded by not only his own children but all children in

the neighbourhood. This violence of temper seems to have been a common family trait, for according to Acharya Kripalani he was the gentlest-tempered in the whole family.

In a household where every member was an uncompromising individualist, young Jiwat was thrown on his own resources. He was wild and wayward and had a healthy contempt for book-learning. Agile and adventurous, he was always up to some mischief or the other. Even now he can climb a palmyra tree with the agility of a squirrel. His one passion was gambling which, as he is fond of saying, he never outgrew, though as he grew older he discarded the dice and learnt to gamble with his life. He experienced as much as he could and read as little as he could so that he was a constant headache to his teachers. Twice he was expelled from the college for his radical political views, first from the Wilson College, Bombay, and later from the D. J. Sind College, Karachi. After graduating and before taking his M. A. degree he worked for some time as a school teacher but was soon obliged to leave the school, for he had a way of infecting the young with his political idealism which the Headmaster considered dangerous and undesirable.

Later he became Professor of History at the Muzaffarpur College in Bihar. It was during his career at Muzaffarpur that he came in contact with Gandhiji. He first met him at Santiniketan in 1914, where Gandhiji and his boys of the Phoenix School had found their home after their return from South Africa. Gandhiji still addresses him as Professor. The Professor was at that time a believer in the political ideology of Tilak and Aurobindo which

his knowledge of history seemed to confirm. One can imagine his sarcastic smile as he listened to the apostle of non-violence expounding his creed. 'A first-class crank,' he must have thought. 'But what a superb crank! Here is a man who is capable of practising what he preaches.' It was in 1917 during the Champaran Satyagraha that the Professor's conversion began. As Gandhiji knew no one else in Muzaffarpur, he came and stayed with him before moving into the interior of the district to lead the peasants of Champaran in their resistance against the oppression of the British indigo planters. For daring to harbour so dangerous a guest, the Professor lost his job in the College. But it was a welcome deliverance, for it gave him a chance to participate actively in the battle, and earn the distinction of being the first Satyagrahi to be arrested in Champaran.

What converted him was not the theory of non-violence but its practice under Gandhiji's leadership. He saw with his own eyes the miracle of the timid, terror-stricken peasants, to whom craven submission to oppression had become a second nature, stand up with their heads erect and defy the armed might of British imperialism. Here was the magician who alone could repeat the miracle all over India and raise its dumb millions to the full stature of manhood without which independence was not only not possible but meaningless. The conversion though slow was complete. The decision made, the Professor cast in his lot with Gandhiji. Since then his faith in him has never wavered. Each fresh experience has only reinforced it, till today his understanding of Gandhiji and his technique of resistance is so deep that it is almost intuitive.

He can almost predict Gandhiji's reactions to any particular issue in so far as the inscrutable Mahatma's reactions can be predicted. He hardly ever reads what Gandhiji writes and can never quote him correctly, and yet his exposition of the Gandhian Way makes explicit what is implicit in Gandhiji's writings and gives coherence to what often seems contradictory.

After Champaran he acted for some time as Professor in the Benares Hindu University till the first Non-co-operation Movement when he, with a batch of students whom he had inspired, left the University and founded the Gandhi Ashram at Benares which he later shifted to Meerut. He was one of the first to carry out in a concrete and organized manner Gandhiji's Constructive Programme in the villages, having early realized that this was the basic preparation for a non-violent struggle for freedom, freedom not only from political but from economic exploitation as well.

In 1923 Gandhiji called him to take charge as Principal or Acharya of the Gujerat Vidyapith, the national college he had founded at Ahmedabad. Since then the Professor has come to be known as Acharya, though Gandhiji himself continues to call him by his former title. He served the Vidyapith for five years in an honorary capacity and then returned to the obscurity of constructive work in the villages. In 1934 he was called by Dr Rajendra Prasad to assist him in the relief work after the great earthquake of Bihar. In the same year he was appointed General Secretary of the Congress.

Such in brief is the political record of a man who, without being a popular hero or a party boss, has been accorded

the highest honour that a Congressman can aspire to. What sort of a man is he? Different people give different answers. Ask his numerous colleagues who have worked with him in the constructive field for years and known him intimately, and you will find that they almost worship him, though an element of fear is not unmixed with the worship. It is obvious that he must have been a hard task-master who did not spare himself. It is equally obvious that he must have been a very affectionate and fascinating teacher, for his old students of Bihar and Gujerat days continue to love and admire him, as few Professors are loved and admired. Those who have worked with him or been his students or otherwise known him intimately do not seem to mind either the violence of his temper or the biting pungency of his tongue. They enjoy his humour even when they occasionally wince under its sarcasm. They know that behind the seeming snobbery of his aloofness, his cynicism and his bantering humour lies a very warm heart rich in human sympathy and affection.

But those who know him only in the political field value him differently. Though he is one of the oldest and most faithful followers of Gandhiji, many Gandhi-ites dislike him intensely. He is an anti-humbug, an enemy of pomposity, and loves to make fun of those who, in their attempt to model themselves on Gandhiji, succeed only in turning themselves into his caricatures. He loves to be frivolous in the presence of the solemn and parades his cynicism before those who take their pretensions too seriously. Once he shocked his audience at a meeting in Ahmedabad, where glowing tributes were being paid to the influence of Gandhiji on Indian life and character, by

remarking that the only influence he could discern of Gandhiji on himself was in his dress.

The Socialists dislike him no less heartily, except such of them as have known him intimately. It is surprising that the Socialists should dislike him, for between his interpretation of Gandhism and their reconsideration of Socialism there is hardly any difference. In 1934 when the Socialist Party was first founded, he was even invited to join it and lead it. He refused on the ground that he did not regard himself an alternative to Gandhiji and that in his opinion such a party within the Congress was not only unnecessary but was likely to do more harm than good. He has never deviated from that view and has made no secret of it. No wonder the Socialists resent his attack on the very *raison d'etre* of their party. And yet this antipathy need not be there if he were more discreet in the expression of his random judgements, and did not make so great a virtue of calling a spade a spade, and if the Socialists, in their turn, were not so much in love with their day-dreams of adolescence.

Politicians are generally adepts in the art of seeming better than they are. Kripalani is, in that respect, the reverse of a politician. He delights in seeming worse than he is, though he resents it if he is judged by what he appears to be. To that extent his logic is a woman's logic. He thinks that he has a right to misrepresent himself but that others have no right to misunderstand him. He can be cynical about others, often out of sheer impishness, but if others are cynical about his motives he thinks they are being perverse. He is at heart generous, sometimes recklessly so, and yet he loves to pick a quarrel with

a station coolie or tongawalla over a two-anna bit. He is completely unattached to material possessions of which he has very little and yet on occasions gives the impression of being a miser. He loves deeply and talks callously, feels intensely and smiles cynically, thinks logically and argues intemperately, follows faithfully and sneers irreverently, has the vision of a revolutionary and blinks like a reactionary. He loves the Socialists and quarrels with them and despises the die-hards and works with them. He is a rebel who conforms to authority, an iconoclast who worships an idol, an idealist who boasts of realism, an ascetic who revels in frivolity. He has no ambition and enters the lists, no axe to grind and takes sides, is a profound believer in non-violence, always itching for a fight.

He is proud of his intellect and flatters himself that he is always logical. But though he has a fine and sensitive intellect, he is more emotional than intellectual, more devotional than rational. He has the brains of a man and the heart of a woman, a combination excellent otherwise but fatal in a politician. He reacts emotionally and then rationalizes his reactions and because he has a sharp intellect, he can, with its rapier-like thrusts, expose the illogicalness of his opponent's position, without however proving the logic of his own. His intellect is at its best in a forensic duel. He wields it as a fencer wields his sword. His weakness as a fencer is that the blood mounts to his brain too easily. He loses his temper and makes himself vulnerable. For all his skill he is no match against a cool, crafty and cunning opponent. That is why he has won more honour than power in the Congress and

though vested with the highest authority feels continually frustrated. He would gladly withdraw from politics and retire to his ashram if he did not feel that withdrawal at this time would be a desertion of the organization he has served so long. He is like a bull yoked to the plough waiting for the end of the furrow.

He grew up in the Gandhian tradition of austere living and active service of the poor, when the reward of patriotism was poverty and prison. He found happiness in that atmosphere of moral idealism. Today he finds the patriots hunting for reward in position and power. He is not cynical enough to reconcile himself to the change, nor strong enough to stem the tide, nor discreet enough to hold his peace. He finds Gandhiji's influence waning and the moral idealism he had inspired and sustained replaced by political realism. For a passionate believer in the Gandhian Way it is not easy to toe the line with those who think that Gandhi has outlived his use. He frets and fumes but is kept in leash by his loyalty to the very values which he defends.

Political virtues are not identical with moral virtues, though the two are not unrelated. While the moral man must carry his conscience with him, the politician must carry the multitude. He must know how to make his will felt, how and when to court the crowd, how and when to coerce it. Not every one is a Gandhi, who is as supreme a politician as he is superb a man. The Acharya lacks the strength to carry both his conscience and the crowd with him and prefers to keep his conscience, which makes him more admirable as a man than effective as a politician. As a man he has a very striking individuality,

which not only attracts attention in a crowd but creates a definite impression. You either like him or dislike him. It is difficult to feel indifferent about him. But in politics he has not been able to make his individuality felt to the same extent, except as an intellectual exponent of the Gandhian Way. In politics he is not reckoned a force in himself, not because he lacks insight or ability but because he lacks that elusive something which makes a man seem a hero to his fellow-men, or that more substantial virtue, the iron will to power, which ruthlessly pursues its goal and which the multitude at once fear and worship. Sometimes his very virtue acts like a drawback as, for example, his loyalty to the Gandhian ideology and to the Congress organization which is interpreted as a proof of his fanaticism or of his lack of original thinking. In democratic politics it is more profitable to be critical than to be loyal, more heroic to be adolescent than to be mature.

He is one of those cases where small vices neutralize big virtues. His biggest vices are his sudden explosions of temper and his irrepressible delight in pricking others' bubbles. He is by nature loving and tolerant and yet he would sometimes fly into such a fit of temper or of sarcasm as to make the person he loves cry or gnash his teeth in rage. What he calls his innocent jokes are more often impish than innocent and hurt more than open criticism. Nobody likes his bubble to be pricked, especially politicians whose greatness depends so largely on seeming bigger than they are. They forgive opposition more easily than ridicule. They prefer an enemy who challenges them to a friend who deflates them, specially when the friend has the gift of wit which makes his remarks too

amusing not to be relished by a third party. He has strong likes and dislikes which he takes no pains to hide. He expresses his reactions with a vehemence which make them seem stronger than they are, and which mislead strangers into thinking that he is intolerant and fanatical. This impression is reinforced by the ascetic cut of his face and the sharp scimitar-shape of his nose. The tenderness in his eyes is not obvious to the superficial eye. These little vices of his have cost him dear politically.

But he does not care. He is cynical of the admiration or censure of those who cannot see beneath the rough coat of arms he wears. 'They say. What do they say? Let them say,' is his attitude. He is sensitive only to Gandhiji's reactions, to whom his devotion is that of a Hindu wife to her husband, except that this devotion is exclusively to Gandhiji's moral and political personality. He cares little for Gandhiji's fads and though he lives for Gandhiji he would find it hard to live with him. This devotion is absolute. It is free from any motive or reservation. It has given him an insight into Gandhiji's mind and personality which no other follower can claim. It is at once the source of his strength and his weakness, his glory and his bondage. Though formally he is the Rashtrapati, his role in the Indian political world is that of the Rashtrapatni, if the real Rashtrapati is Gandhi.

PRESIDENT KRIPALANI

By MOHAN LAL SAXENA

IT is no easy task to write about a public worker who is still in harness; but it becomes still more difficult if he happens to be associated with the writer in the same sphere of activity. These subjective difficulties apart, the complex personality of Rashtrapati Kripalani further adds to the difficulty of the task. The feelings, no less than the impressions of those who have known him from a distance are difficult to be reconciled with those of others who have come in close contact with him. Both cherish respect and admiration for the man but the former are actuated by fear while the latter by love. To the one he appears as a cynic suffering from, and nursing some grievance against the whole world; to the other he is friend, philosopher and guide, not only appreciating their difficulties and sympathizing with them, as so many do, but also applying an understanding mind to their problems and extending a helping hand to lift them out of their difficulties. Therefore, we need not be surprised that while many have been scared away by his austere exterior and cynical and blunt approach to men and problems, the number of those to whom he has endeared himself, who became more and more attracted to him until they became attached to him with almost unbreakable ties, is equally large. Those who have become victims of his

biting sarcasm can never realize what rich humour he possess and further that there is nothing personal underlying it. The late Sir C. Y. Chintamani and other Indian Liberals could never forgive him or forget the cryptic epithet 'political go-betweens' by which he described them. They even regarded him as rather cheap and vulgar. As against this, we know in what great esteem he is held by the top-rank Congress leaders and particularly Mahatma Gandhi, for his ability, sincerity, integrity and selflessness, notwithstanding his short temper.

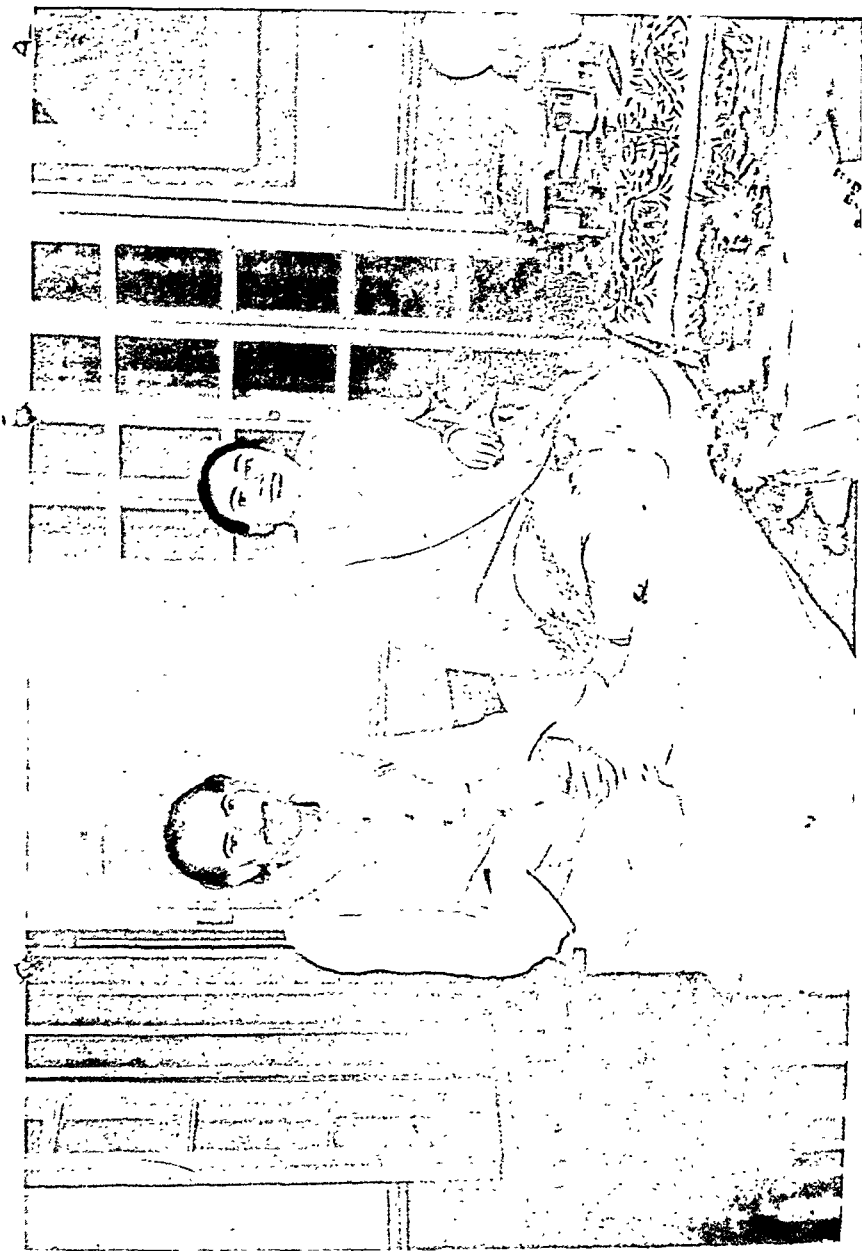
The fact that he has been closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi since the beginning of his political activities in India at Champaran and that he has taken a leading part not only in the Satyagraha movement, but, unlike many prominent Congress leaders, has faithfully and enthusiastically carried on the Constructive Programme and is now the Rashtrapati with the blessings of Mahatmaji, is enough to testify to the sterling merit of his character. Mahatmaji is no easy task-master. In fact, he seems to have different standards for his followers as compared to those for his opponents.

In the short space at my disposal, I, therefore, propose to deal with Kripalaniji's political career instead of describing many of his qualities of head and heart.

Before the advent of Mahatmaji in the field of Indian politics, the whole outlook was gloomy. History showed only one way of winning freedom. Most of the patriotic young men had therefore no alternative but to sympathize with and support the revolutionary movement, morally, if not actively. Kripalaniji was no exception. While working as Professor of History in Muzaffarpur College,

he attracted a number of young men, some of whom later became actively associated with the terrorist movement of Bengal. It must be said to his credit that the moment Gandhiji showed the non-violent way to freedom, he became a convert and was instrumental in weaning away many young men from the terrorist fold. During the Non-co-operation movement, he was the foremost to resign his professorship. His example led to hundreds of young men giving up their studies and following the footsteps of their *Guru*—some of whom are still engaged in carrying out constructive work and are today his best lieutenants. He later on joined the Gujerat Vidyapith and worked there for some time. It was here that he came in still closer contact with Gandhiji. Although he never joined the Ashram—sometimes he even criticized the Ashram rules and made fun of the Ashramites—he always led a simple and austere life which had great influence on his pupils. He left Gujerat Vidyapith to organize Khadi work in the United Provinces, where, notwithstanding a large number of political leaders and workers, the work was suffering for want of a front-rank worker giving his whole time and attention. The establishment of the U. P. Gandhi Ashram with headquarters at Meerut and production centres at Akbarpur, Ranewa and other places and Khaddar Bhandars in most of the towns in the U. P. is the result of his concentrated effort, systematic planning and business-like approach to the whole problem with selfless service and missionary zeal.

Thus till 1934 he took very little part in provincial politics and was not even a member of the A.-I. C. C. During the Bihar earthquake, he took a prominent part

in organizing relief work. So it was in 1934 that Rajendra Babu had him elected as the General Secretary of the Congress, which office he continued to hold till July 1946, i.e. a few months before he was elected President. I think in the annals of the Congress no person has held this important office, without a break, for such a long time and this was indeed a very eventful period for the Indian National Congress both internally and externally. He could manage to do so because of the wholehearted attention and time which he gave to A.-I. C. C. work. It is indeed creditable to him that notwithstanding his temper and Gandhian views in politics he enjoyed the confidence of successive Presidents, some of whom held even opposite views. It was fortunate that during this time he married Sucheta Devi, a hard-working and devoted political worker, who shared the public responsibilities which her husband had undertaken. Mahatmaji is a great admirer of her. While speaking at a workers' meeting at Benares after the Individual Civil Disobedience, he jocularly remarked that if Acharya Kripalani could not be happy with such a talented and devoted lady as better half, then there must be something wrong with him. It may be noted that Mahatmaji seems to enjoy a joke at his own expense. Once while travelling in the third class from Barabankin to Hardoi, a large number of villagers had, as usual, collected for Mahatmaji's *darshan*. A few of them even attempted to board the same compartment, but Kripalaniji was at the door and pushed them back. They shouted *Mahatmaji ki jai* in protest; Kripalaniji immediately retorted, 'Let Mahatma go to hell.' Thereupon the people were a little enraged and shouted back:

SRIMATI SUCHETA KRIPALANI

'You are very ungrateful; you are sending to hell him by whose grace you have become Secretary.' Kripalaniji was taken aback and Gandhiji and others burst into laughter. But Ba who was sitting close by became serious and when the train began to move, she said: 'Well, Professor, you should not have said that.' Kripalaniji was nonplussed as Mahatmaji and others began to laugh. Kripalaniji, however, replied that he had not meant Bapu, but had cursed Mahatma. But this explanation did not satisfy Ba and she mildly said: 'In any case you should not have used those words.'

Kripalaniji's election as President must have caused surprise to many. For till a few weeks before his nomination, his name had not been mentioned in connexion with this high office. Of course, there had been great surprise and regret at his not being nominated as General Secretary and still more at his exclusion from the Congress Working Committee by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, but no one had suspected that, in the course of a few months, the discarded stone was to decorate the pinnacle of the great national edifice.

It is too premature to say anything about his work as President, as he has been in office for a very short time, but it must be noticed that his election has been unique in certain respects. He is the first person to hold the high honour, who may truly be said to have risen from the rank of ordinary workers. Again, unlike his predecessors, he has not risen through the provincial ladder. But still he combines in himself the rich experience of several provinces. Born in Sind, he studied in Bombay, started life as a professor in Bihar and later shifted to the U. P. where he

has lived and worked for a very long time. He also spent a number of years in Gujerat while teaching in the Vidyapith. Not only that; he claims Bengal as his father-in-law's home. Besides, as General Secretary, he has come into close touch with Congress work in every province and I hope this wide knowledge of men and affairs will stand him in good stead in discharging the great task he has undertaken—namely, to purge and purify the Congress organization of undesirable elements and corrupt influences. If the Indian National Congress is to fulfil its mission of establishing Swaraj—Government of the people, by the people and for the people—in the true sense of the term, the Congress has to be brought to its moorings of sacrifice, selfless service, simple living and high thinking. Kripalaniji is most suited for the work as he has not simply preached but has tried and succeeded to a great measure in living according to those principles. But that is not enough. Unless he has the moral support and active co-operation of the Congress leaders, and workers throughout the country, his efforts cannot fructify. I hope and pray better sense will still prevail with us, the Congress leaders and workers, and that the sacrifices of millions of our countrymen and women will not be allowed to go in vain.

I cannot do better than close this brief sketch of Kripalaniji with the idea that if, at this critical juncture in the history of our country, he succeeds in the arduous task which he has publicly undertaken, he will go down in history as one of the great presidents of the Indian National Congress.

ACHARYA KRIPALANI, THE PROFESSOR

By NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

To the popular mind, Gandhiji stands for the values which the East has always cherished, and which it was in danger of losing after contact with the industrial and military civilization of the West. Indeed he has been the symbol of India's challenge to the West.

Unfortunately, the emotional satisfaction which men have derived from his leadership in the national struggle has overshadowed, and perhaps also partly inhibited, the desire to go into a fuller examination of what his leadership stands for in Economics and Politics. Ever since Gandhiji's ideas on this subject first took crystallized form in 1907, in his little book entitled *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, he has held that true democracy can only be established if the instruments of production and of government are both decentralized and placed under the control of the common people. But this aspect of his teachings has generally been overlooked; and men have followed his leadership, often without fully realizing where he wants to take them along with him.

For his own part, Gandhiji has never been sparing in his efforts to make the implications of his ideas clear; he has written voluminously in the *Young India* and the *Harijan*, in order to carry the public along with him as his

own ideas on various subjects have also evolved. Gandhiji has the genius for fashioning slogans presentable to popular minds in order to rally them round to some noble cause. His Swaraj-in-one-year, Charka and Khadi, Truth and Non-violence have thus served the national purpose time after time. But those who have followed his leadership in political struggles have not mostly had the time to examine in full the implications of these terms. Mentally, many of them have revolted against the mediaevalism of the spinning wheel, against the impracticability of holding on to Truth and Non-violence in the modern world. But in spite of their inner resistance, the personality of the great leader has swayed them into action, and they have accepted his spinning wheel as well as the extreme insistence upon Truth and Non-violence as fads to be put up with in order to retain his leadership.

This has been the general popular approach to Gandhiji in Indian politics. But, now and then, there have been intellectuals who have refused to be satisfied with such a half-hearted manner of accepting Gandhiji's leadership, and have consequently tried to penetrate behind the apparent mediaevalism of his ideas to see how far they are applicable to problems of the modern world. Of such intellectuals, one of the most outstanding figures in India's political world has been Acharya Kripalani.

At one time Acharya Kripalani is reported to have been a member of a party wedded to methods of violence to free India from foreign subjugation. But when in 1916 he came into intimate association with Gandhiji during the Peasant Movement in Champaran, he found a leader to whom loyalty could be transferred without any reservation

whatsoever. The years devoted to the organization of the Shree Gandhi Ashram at Meerut also helped to enrich his experience, and reinforced his faith in the practicability of the Gandhian Way.

In politics, Acharya Kripalani has held steadfastly to the leadership of the Master. Power as power has hardly interested him. When it has been thrust upon him, he has rather tried to move out of the way by means of a peculiar personal attitude. As a writer, he has distinguished himself by penetration and lucidness of expression; but perhaps also no less by his pungent humour. A thin vein of cynicism runs through his speeches and writings; but it is more like an armour with which he protects himself from the temptation of wheeling himself into a position of power by pandering to the public taste. This cynicism is the solvent which keeps his mind unclogged, and prevents him from hardening in spirit. In spite of unquestioned ability and experience in administrative affairs, which has been amply proved by his long service as the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, Acharya Kripalani is never tired of impressing upon other people that he is a misfit everywhere, and would feel very happy if he were left alone. Indeed, it really seems that he would be happiest if he found the leisure to interpret Gandhism in terms acceptable to the modern mind, and could also try adequate social experiments in order to prove the worth of the Gandhian Way without any interruption from adventitious forces like the selfishness and love of power of those who might also have a share in those experiments.

Acharya Kripalani's undoubted loyalty to Gandhiji does not however mean that he allows his love to over-

shadow intellectual judgement; for, above all, his loyalty is to Intellect and Truth rather than to the person of the Master. There have been occasions when there have been differences between the two. Then he has argued with Gandhiji with all the reverence due to the latter; but has never surrendered his judgement until he was convinced.

Gandhiji has a soft corner in his heart for Acharya Kripalani, whom he endearingly calls the Professor. One of the strong points in Gandhiji's character is his readiness to submit his own opinions to criticism and examination by others when he happens to be in apparent conflict with current opinions. Among those whose criticism he prizes in this respect, Acharya Kripalani occupies a high position.

Although an intellectual, first and foremost, dressed with the trappings of cynicism, which has resulted from a deep knowledge of human affairs, Acharya Kripalani is fully aware of the limitations from which intellect itself suffers. His insistence upon the 'Why' and 'Whither now' at every stage, and his deep loyalty to the people's organization in the shape of the Congress, have given him a selflessness or a moral ballast which keeps his flight steady through the maze of contemporary events. In fact, he is a true representative intellectual, whose intellectualism has been informed and enriched by higher moral considerations.

SOME OLD MEMORIES

By SARLA DEVI

THE name of Acharya Kripalani is generally associated with a stinging tongue. When friends with whom I lived and worked at Wardha told me that they were expecting Dada, and also told me of his reputation, with a natural aversion to contacts with the great or the learned, I confined myself to a 'namaste acquaintance', and this nodding acquaintance remained the terms of our intercourse for about four years. Occasionally I did a little typing or editing work for Kripalaniji, and found him exceptionally gentle and appreciative, failing to understand why he was so lenient with such an insignificant person.

In 1941, when Kripalaniji was staying in Sevagram to conduct the Individual Civil Disobedience movement under Gandhiji's guidance, we spent the hot weather as sole occupants of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh premises, and I then came to know the real 'Dada' who has gathered around him, in his institution, the Shree Gandhi Ashram, Meerut, such a large band of devoted constructive workers from all ranks of society and of all grades of education—Dada who, whilst responsible for the conduct of a nation-wide civil disobedience campaign, could find time from Sevagram to visit the dying daughter of an old worker, taking treatment at Bhowali. She expired contented a day or two after his darshan, and he said gently on his

return, 'I had to go, she couldn't die until she had taken her farewell of her Dada.'

His heartfelt concern for his 'companion' Sucheta Devi, then undergoing her first term of imprisonment, was touching in the extreme. The practical simplicity, humility and frugality found in one of such high intellect and political position were a revelation. His whimsical philosophical musings as he paced the room for inspiration endeared him to one. During these days, while washing his own clothes, he taught me how to do my dhobying economically and efficiently in Indian fashion, and was merciless in his criticism if my clothes were one whit less white than his. His appreciation of gratitude for small services touched me deeply as we grew to know one another better, and one day he remarked with the dry smile and thin voice which always accompany his witty sallies, 'I had never thought of you before as an individual—I always thought you just went with the fixtures.'

At this time, I was suffering from bad health, and it was essential that I should take up work in a less trying climate. I learnt accidentally that there was a branch of the Shree Gandhi Ashram, Meerut, in the interior of Almora District, and it was fixed up that I should go and live there.

When Dada introduced me to Shri Vichitra Narayan, the Secretary of the Gandhi Ashram, who had come to Sevagram for the meetings of the A.-I.S.A., I was amazed to see his frolicsome mood and listen to their loud and even boisterous laughter as they cracked jokes like schoolboys while carrying on their serious business.

In July 1942, Dada and Sucheta Devi came to Chanauda, Almora, for two or three days, leaving straight for Wardha, Bombay and the 9th August. During those black days of suppression, the memory of that short interlude was like a little oasis in the desert of isolation. Their joy at the beauty of towering hills, pine and oak forests, the grandeur of the everlasting snows, and the bubbling of brooks, was an unforgettable experience. One day, after eating lunch on the banks of a brook, they used the newspaper wrappings to make toy boats and race them in the rain-swelled hill stream. The stream was a rocky one—the boats were quickly wrecked, but their joy in victory and survival could not have been exceeded by that of any little child on holiday. Some shepherd-boys, watching them in amazement, looked rather terrified—for one meets many wandering lunatics in the hills, and these apparently appeared to them to be fairly advanced cases. When Sucheta Devi invited them to join in their game they were still more alarmed, and disappeared into the jungle with their cattle.

One evening, as we were walking along the motor road, a little shepherd boy was driving home a beautiful small bullock, jet black and velvety. Kripalani jovially said to him, 'What a beautiful little cow! How much milk does she give?' The look of contempt on this little village boy's face can be better imagined than described, as he replied to the learned General Secretary of the Congress, 'Cow!!! It's a bullock!' Often when I am asked to speak at meetings or write articles, I think of this little incident, and refuse with all humility, remembering that 'Fools step in where angels fear to tread.' How often

are we of lesser intellect not tempted to enter lightly into spheres of which we have insufficient knowledge? (That is why Tandonji found it difficult to extract this article from me.)

During the early days of the 1942 movement, I was completely shut off from all news of Kripalaniji and Sucheta Devi. All the workers of Shree Gandhi Ashram, Chanauda, were arrested. When these young village boys, who had mostly in the first place joined the Ashram for economic reasons, were told, 'Sign a bond to have nothing to do with the Ashram in future, and go home,' they replied with one accord, 'No, we're in this to the end,' and for four of them it was literally true; they, along with three other Congress workers of the neighbourhood, paid the supreme penalty in the cause of the country's freedom.

Once, when in Meerut, I heard that Dada had sent word from Ahmednagar, enquiring of my whereabouts, and saying that his balance there was at the disposal of any of his workers who were 'out' and in difficulties.

After my arrest, on being transferred to Lucknow Central Jail in the summer of 1945, where Sucheta Devi was also detained, I was touched to the heart to know of Dada's concern for my welfare, and his indignation at the manner in which I had been treated by Government. It was incredible that in the midst of his own preoccupations and concern at public conditions he should have time to feel so deeply for me. When, after the release of the Working Committee, he came to interview us in Lucknow Central Jail, the warmth of his embrace could not have been exceeded by that of a true elder brother.

After my release, when we were discussing my constructive work, for which he had guaranteed funds for initial expenditure, he said, 'I never interfere with my workers. I merely indicate their sphere of work, and give them the opportunity to start. Success or failure rests with them.'

Those who had the privilege of staying as his guests at Swaraj Bhawan, could not but be impressed with the simplicity and frugality with which he lived. He daily washed his own clothes, spotlessly white, and also helped Sucheta Devi with the kitchen work, seeing for himself that not a grain of food was wasted.

These are the personal traits which have endeared Acharya Kripalani to all who have come to know him closely. In public work, his reputation for a biting tongue is due to his rock-bottom sincerity—the deep hurt which poverty, suffering and social and political injustice cause to those sensitive spirits in our country who are in closest affinity with Mahatma Gandhi. The sincerity of a practical worker, careful to every detail, devoting every minute of his life in good or indifferent health to the details, large or small, of the work to which he has pledged himself, exacting the same sincerity and selflessness from his workers, but giving them in exchange a deep love and affection, an interest in their daily lives, cannot stand the verbosity of propagandists and political opportunists and the natural response of the practical worker to the player with words is that venomous tongue for which he has gained such a reputation.

His independent spirit, accepting what appears to him to be the truth and following it fearlessly, bending before

none, not even Gandhiji, replying to all with his customary bluntness, has perhaps won him enemies in the field of public work—but he himself is above personalities and petty animosities, engrossed in the cause to which he has given himself.

Such is the man who, non-co-operating in 1921, with four of five students and a joint capital of Rs. 25, taking up khaddar work, and earning their keep by hawking in the streets of Benares, living in simplicity and frugality, has built up his institution, the Shree Gandhi Ashram, on a self-supporting economic basis, and in August 1942 could call on a band of 700 workers pledged to himself and his institution—penetrating even into the interior of those remote hills, where seven village workers, without a regret, breathed their last, undaunted, some after long and painful illness contracted in jail, some answering the final call there almost at a moment's notice.

OUR RASHTRAPATI

By K. K. BHATTACHARYA

FOR twelve years Acharya Kripalani was the General Secretary of the biggest organization of the country, and naturally the nation's choice rightly fell upon him to guide the country to the dawn of freedom. He has a peculiar and uncanny power of distinguishing wheat from chaff, an intuition, as it were, of knowing the truth from a mass of irrelevant details. His vibrant personality, purity of mind, selflessness, his keen, massive and analytical brain—all would be displayed to the best advantage in the most critical period of the nation's history. He is the fittest man to guide the nation's destiny at the zero hour.

Engaged as a professor in a Bihar college he taught the boys not in the humdrum way, but tried to inculcate into them a higher life and a nobler vision. This man as a teacher was original in outlook, in dress, in manners, in his way of thinking and in his way of teaching. He was the idol of the students who found in him a man of profound intellect combined with great softness of heart.

Slender in monetary resources, he never thought what would happen to him in future. He jumped into the sea of political uncertainty, as it were, to sink or to swim. Firm and resolute, he has been accustomed to the privations of life, prepared to lie on a bed of thorns, ready to

partake of the humblest of dishes. He has the stuff of which Sanyasis or monks are made.

This man, in my opinion, is unshakable in spirit and unbreakable in resolution. He thinks himself to be a soldier always in armour, who must prepare himself for a *hard life and, therefore, must be ready to face any priva*tion at any time as any day he may be clapped again into prison by the British Government. Never has he been intoxicated with power or position. He was constantly called upon by various students' organizations of Allahabad to address them in their various functions. He would tell them in clear terms their strong points and also their weaknesses. He would not pander to their vanity, but would tell them that they would have to be soldiers for freedom and humble workers who must not aspire for leadership. Anyone attending any of his lectures would return with some new ideas in his brain and would be elevated by his idealism.

His sense of humour is inimitable. He would jeer at himself and at others, and even when overworked he would laugh away the worries of the day with some humorous stories or anecdotes. Sarcastic like Voltaire and cynical like Diogenes, it should be said, however, that they are only the externals of his character. I can well illustrate his sense of humour and sarcasm. When once he was asked by some impertinent students why he kept long hair, he said, 'Since I have got a small head, I must conceal it by long hair' and the boys felt duly snubbed. To talk with the Acharya on any political matter is itself a liberal education. He is not an individual, but an institution. He is saturated with Gandhian

philosophy of life and living. Of all the politicians in India love of power has no attraction for him. It is, indeed, a matter of great marvel how this man, in the midst of his most strenuous work as Secretary of the Congress in the crucial period of the Congress, could snatch hours and devote himself to writing on Gandhian philosophy, Gandhian ideal, Gandhian education and Gandhian revolution.

According to him the schools, colleges and universities do not impart a proper sort of national education fit for this country and, therefore, he criticizes the modern system of education which makes square pegs in round holes and round pegs in square holes without proper development of body, mind and spirit, whereas the Gandhian system of education, which aims at all-round development and at the same time teaches a boy to earn while learning, is best suited to modern conditions. I have found him laying the greatest emphasis before the students on the supreme necessity of building up their character. Purity of conduct, nobility of character, selflessness and the desire not to lead but to follow, not to be master, but to be contented to be the camp follower of a great cause—these are the ideals to be followed by the students. What he himself practises, what he himself believes firmly, he states with vehemence of language before the public. At public meetings his tone would reach the highest pitch of idealism. Himself an idealist, though not divorced from realism, he tells his audience all that, he feels, is required to regenerate this country. The Mahatma is his General, Field-Marshal, his object of worship and his ideal. In 1941-42, just before the August Movement he emphasized

one fact in all the meetings which he addressed and it was this that Gandhiji, the leader of the nation, must be followed most faithfully. He also emphasized that there was no greater revolutionary in the country than the Mahatma. We could not even realize the full implication of this statement till in the famous 'Quit India' resolution on the 8th of August, 1942, we found that it was absolutely correct. No other leader in India could have the courage to mobilize the total mass of the country for a struggle against a most organized government. The Mahatma had, as it were, electrified the nation and infused a new spirit into it. The words, therefore, of the Acharya which some doubted came to be absolutely true.

He stands for Hindu-Muslim unity and in this respect he is like his master, the Mahatma, who knows that the Hindus and the Muslims are the two eyes, as it were, of the Indian nation. The nation must live in cohesion and harmony on the basis of Hindu-Muslim unity.

As soon as he was elected President of the Congress he did not allow the grass to grow under his feet, but rushed to the most affected and dangerous areas in East Bengal to see with his own eyes and to hear with his own ears the terrible happenings at Noakhali and other places. At considerable peril to his safety he went there. He did not go to Bengal when it was in a festive mood, ready to greet him with tons of garlands, to arrange for him mile-long processions and streaming banners and mammoth meetings, when the gay city of Calcutta and the smiling towns of Bengal would shower flowers on him from the windows and balconies. But he went to Bengal when she was in great agony and humiliation and when she was

weeping tears of anguish—tears that were hot and streaming down her cheeks at the loot, arson, butcheries, bestialities, abduction of women, mass rapings, forcible conversions and marriages. Forlorn Bengal was befriended by the Acharya. 'A friend in need is a friend indeed.' Bengal owes him a debt of gratitude.

A SNAP-SHOT

By SHYAMA CHARAN KALA

THE Swaraj Bhawan compound is resounding with Marxist slogans. A Communist celebrity of Bombay is haranguing a student audience on Leninism. Scores of hammer and sickle flags are flying flamboyantly. About three hundred yards away a tall figure, with dishevelled hair, an aggressive nose and eloquent eyes, is playing cricket with some street urchins. Asked why he is not attending the meeting, he replies, 'Cricket is more instructive than Socialist speeches.' The figure is Acharya Kripalani and the answer is typical of his contemptuous attitude to the Leftists in the country.

The Acharya is of the opinion that Indian Marxists, Communists and Congress Socialists, talk in the air. They live in a dreamland of their own creation which is divorced from reality. They habitually plough the desert sands of destructive criticism. The comrades talk of the masses though they are out of touch with them. Even to the study of Indian politics they have made no contribution. Their cuckatoo repetition of the goody goody phraseology of Marxism shows a distressing lack of originality.

Acharya Kripalani's character is full of paradoxes. An iconoclast by temperament, he hero-worships Mahatma Gandhi. A cynic, if there ever was one, he has elevated

his faith in the Charkha to the heights of a philosophy of life. He eats sparingly, though he is connoisseur of good food. Had he been born in France, he might have blossomed into a hedonist. But he believes in restraint. As great a spell binder as any in the country, he scorns the applause of the multitude. A controversialist with remarkable ability, he avoids debate. He is a self-effacing saint in an age when politicians thrive on self-advertisement.

Marx was not a Marxist. Kripalani, the ablest exponent of Gandhism, is too much of a Kripalani-ite to be a fanatical Gandhi-ite. His book, *The Gandhian Way*, is creative in its interpretative brilliance. Kripalani has tried to show that Gandhism is not a static creed but a dynamic, ever-growing philosophy of life

There is something of Shaw in Kripalani. He has Shavian arrogance, self-consciousness and a seeming levity that hides wisdom and truth. A cynical smile always hovers over his lips, brightens his sombre face and invests his features with life. His reticence and massive reserve invest his personality with an aura of mystery. But any chance remark may sting him to the quick, animate his face, invigorate his body and galvanize his seemingly lethargic intelligence into life. His wit, almost Swiftian in its brutality, holds people in awe and wonder. Asked once if the Congress Working Committee was thinking of expelling Congress Socialists, he replied with his customary brilliance, 'Why should we think of expelling them? We have given them a long rope. We know they are capable of hanging themselves.'

A UNIQUE PERSONALITY

By L. M. THAPALYAL

WITH the election of Jiwatram Bhagwandas Kripalani to the Presidentship of the Indian National Congress, the leadership of the Indian masses passes into the hands of one of the most unique personalities which have attained eminence in the Gandhian era. Back in 1917 one of the happiest accidents in Congress history occurred when, during his visit to Champaran, Mahatma Gandhi met Acharya Kripalani.

Those were the dark days of imperialist repression and none dared invite the wrath of authorities by becoming Gandhiji's host. Then two professors from far off Sind, Prof. Kripalani and Prof. Malkani, knowing full well the consequences of their action, housed the 'rebel', and were, naturally, sacked from their jobs. With his *guru-dakshina* paid, Kripalani started on the Gandhian way; the philosophy of 'Satya' and 'Ahimsa' found its ablest exponent and the Mahatma 'discovered' one of his doughtiest generals to conduct his moral war against imperialism and into the hearts of Indian people demoralised by a century of foreign domination.

While the Champaran incident has its importance, it will be a mistake to suppose that, if chance had not thrown him into Gandhiji's company, Kripalani would have continued to remain a professor. No sort of college job

would have been able to accommodate his diverse, intensely alive personality. He belongs to that class of men who carry the question mark like the Cross, always questioning and challenging the static order of things. His quest took him to religion. He made up his mind to renounce the world and lead the life of a religious recluse. But his sense of humour—the capacity to be able to laugh at himself, as he says—saved him. He saw the need for action rather than retirement. Then he was drawn to the ideas and methods of Gandhism and found the promptings of his own soul in complete accord with them. He had found himself.

But not even Gandhism has been able to overshadow his unique individuality. Ably interpreting and faithfully following Gandhism, he is not a faddist like several other followers of the Mahatma. A mind like his cannot be content to crawl in set grooves nor can a personality like his allow itself to be bound by prescribed rules of conduct.

The Acharya seems to have acquired this trait from his family. He is the only survivor of a group of seven brothers none of whose lives are devoid of a touch of drama. Two of them decided to change their religion, broke with the family and became Muslims. One joined a secret political party and figured in the famous Silken Handkerchief Conspiracy. He left India in the course of his activities and died in Turkey several years ago. One of the Acharya's brothers became a Sannyasi and went to live in the Himalayas. Acharya Kripalani's nearest living blood relation now is his sister Mrs Kikiben Lalwani, a leading Congresswoman of Sind. He is very much attached to his only sister.

His friends of early years remember Jiwatram as the most mischievous boy that ever went to school. He could invent remarkable practical jokes and play them on teachers and boys with perfect art. He would go for his evening walks with his pockets bulging with stones which he knew how to handle. One of his exploits at college got him in a jam. He was found out and rusticated. When he was invited to speak at the same college some years back he did not fail to make a reference to his rustication.

At Sukkur where he was teaching in a school, he got into trouble with his English Inspector. During the inspection the boys were cowed down by the presence of the 'sahib' and would not answer his questions. The Acharya turned to the boys and told them in Sindhi: 'Why do you funk? Is he a wild animal who will eat you up? It's a shame that you should lose your nerves just because he is an Englishman.' The Inspector demanded why he was tipping off the boys. Irritated at the charge, Kripalani translated word for word what he had told the boys. The irate Inspector sent a strong report against him and asked the headmaster to take action. The headmaster's reply was: 'Sir, we can't take action against such a man. You don't know him.'

Even in the Congress, he has always been outspoken and fearless. He could never submit to a slavish carrying out of Congress policy and whenever difference arose at the meetings of the Working Committee he unwaveringly held to his own views. His sardonic tongue and the way he has of holding the adversary's case to merciless ridicule led very often to frayed tempers in Congress Cabinet

meetings. It is known to very few people that during his term of General Secretaryship he resigned from the Working Committee thrice when differences on questions of policy arose. Every time he had his way and subsequent events proved him right.

Kripalani shuns publicity. No trumpet blare of press propaganda has carried him to the top. He is a man of faith and solid, silent action and has devoted his life to carrying out the Constructive Programme and building up the Congress organization. He has never craved for leadership.

Kripalani's sharp features, broad grin, beak-shaped nose and tall gaunt form lent themselves remarkably well to cartooning. In public speaking he has a typical mannerism of waving a limp arm to dismiss the adversary's case with contempt. His speaking is not the poetic effulgence of an Azad or the loud thinking of a Nehru or the steady hammering of a Patel. He starts in a level raucous voice which changes pitch in a rich variety of expression as the theme unfolds itself. He is a master of attack and his weapon almost always is satire. He will begin by stating the opponent's case, building it bit by bit, making the weakest link look the strongest, and when the edifice is complete and apparently sound, pull out the keystone so that the whole structure comes tumbling down ludicrously amidst the cheers and laughter of a charmed audience. At times when the subject does not require satirical treatment, he makes a direct attack, slashing, cutting, tearing mercilessly, all the time taking his stand on a higher, superior sense of morality.

Kripalani's personality eludes definition. He is variously spoken of as straight or shrewd, egoistical or meek,

esoteric or indulgent, fierce or forgiving, rebellious or temperate, saintly or satanic. While none of these qualities can serve as a label for him, they are all parts of his character.

In his habits of life, too, Kripalani presents a study in contrast. He leads a regular life which does not allow for the waste of a single minute, but when some of his intimate friends are about he can go on talking and laughing for hours as if he had no other job on earth but to crack jokes. His life has been devoted to politics but his closest friends and associates are non-political. He loves good company but enjoys solitude as much. He has reduced his needs to a degree of simplicity which is almost fantastic, but he does not spurn the little pleasantries of life and can always enjoy a good dish or a well-kept garden. He is a spiritualist who can 'laugh at himself and jeer at others'; he is a 'man' of strong likes and dislikes, intensely passionate, but equally restrained; he is a votary of 'Ahimsa' who eats flesh and likes it.

Shreemati Sucheta Kripalani, the President's Bengali wife, is about twenty years her husband's junior. But no couple could be more ideal. They have been married these nine years now and their fondness for each other could beat that of any young couple. It is a tribute to the personality of Suchetaji that the austere Gandhi-ite fell in love with her. She is a mild woman with an immense charm of manner and quick understanding. She has secured her place in the political field and her work for the Kasturba Memorial Trust has marked her out as one of the best field workers and organizers among the Congresswomen. Incidentally, for the first time in several

years we have now a prominent political worker as India's 'First Lady'.

At home Mrs Kripalani is the ideal wife. When she is not in jail or on her unending tours, her main occupation is to see that her husband is comfortable. Brought up in the Gandhian school of self-help, the Acharya prefers to do his own cooking and laundering. But when Mrs Kripalani is at home she just forbids him to do any such thing and he obeys. She knows he likes good food and takes care that he has it. Acharya Kripalani is a heavy smoker and appreciates a cup of coffee after dinner. He does not eat with his fingers but uses the fork without the knife or spoon.

The drawing room of the Kripalanis is distinguished by its neatness and simplicity. Of course, there is no striving after any special effects. Only, everything must be in order and dusted clean. The things that hold the eye are a set of brightly decorated Hala chairs which are typical pieces of Sindhi furniture. Another interesting piece of furniture in the house is what in Sindhi is known as 'Peengho' which is a type of jhoola or hanging bedstead. The Peengho is a favourite with Kripalani. He loves to sit or recline on it and read or talk.

When Kripalaniji has no appointments outside, he is mostly writing and keeps at it for hours on end. A number of his books and articles were written in long sittings at a large and low window at his Swaraj Bhawan house. He likes a game of badminton in the evening and, being agile and light-footed, is good at it. His opponent is mostly Suchetaji and he never fails to make a joke when she takes a difficult point or he loses one. Another game

which he has begun to like after his detention in Ahmadnagar Fort is 'Chausar'. But his most favourite relaxation is music and the two spend several evenings together, Mrs Kripalani singing for him in her rich melodious voice.

A PLEASANT COMPANION

By P. K. BANERJI

WHEN Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru formed his Working Committee he must have felt an awful wrench to part with such a valued colleague as Kripalaniji. For who would not like to have such a lovable person always with him? His uncommon understanding is the chief trait in his character, while his other qualities of head and heart are so harmoniously mixed in him that you may easily call him nature's own man whom Shakespeare would have liked to eulogise. Always smiling, with a ready wit, he brings to bear upon his mental perspective a generous apprisement of the other's point of view.

I have never seen Kripalaniji in a gloomy frame of mind, but always radiating fun and laughter. He is perhaps the only man I have known in public life who bears the heavy responsibilities of his office with a smile which is so catching that you forget your own sorrows. Unassuming to an extent that might seem in others a simulating garb of party ideology, Kripalaniji moves with measured steps like a tried soldier, fully alive to the situation around him, and never seems to leave anything to chance.

This slow yet decisive move on every occasion that calls for action lends to his being an inner strength which makes him so human and natural that even those who may not agree with him have no cause for any grouse against him.

This reminds me of an incident. A few years ago I drove Kripalaniji to the Muhammad Ali Park where a meeting was being held. When an hour or so later I came to pick him up I heard whispers of a slight unpleasantness with a journalist whom we all knew to be one of those cantankerous men who love to pick a quarrel with everybody. As a member of the local journalists' association, however, he had to be vindicated. I asked Kripalaniji his own version of the incident—and in his characteristic manner he laughed it away saying that it was meeting impudence with impudence, and he happened to prove stronger. I told him that the journalists' association was contemplating a resolution condemning his action. He kept silent. When the resolution came to him, he just apologised and thus silenced the irate young journalists.

That is how Kripalaniji likes to handle a situation, for he knows his mind and is sure of his steps. If he lacks the futile blustering or the empty bombast of some of his compatriots, he is equal to them all in intrepidity and readiness for action—but he hates being conventional or even to move with the team for the sake of party discipline, though, paradoxically enough, he has never broken a single one of the Congress tenets. In this respect he is an incorrigible individualist who hates the crowd as something essentially vicious in body politic.

And yet he is as simple as a peasant, and has always had the interests of the tillers of the soil at heart. He rises to the heights of poetic imagery when describing their terrible condition, and always speaks of the great spiritual awakening brought about by Gandhiji, an awakening which is sure to bring about a complete change in human

values, such as the West is not very likely to achieve. But though fundamentally he is at heart, as in action, a Socialist, he fights shy of that appellation. He is, to be more precise, a Gandhi-ite (if one may coin that word) and like Dr Păttabhi Sitaramayya he is an accredited commentator of the Gandhian Way of life in which the Socialist doctrine of subdued violence and possible revenge has no place.

Though an unbeliever, he has great respect for spiritual values. He once related to me a story of how a beggar, who asked for alms, blessed instead of cursing a shopkeeper who turned him away and how within ten minutes of the beggar's departure from the shop, it caught fire and all its goods were completely destroyed. This, he said, was the moral of Gandhi's spiritualism. 'Surely one day', he exclaimed, 'the British Empire will crash at the doors of Gandhiji.' And then slowly and gradually he unfolded the Gandhian creed and spoke like a man inspired.

But though such a close disciple of the Mahatma, he does not go the whole hog with him. His individualism, referred to above, leaves him free to make occasional departures from the strict code of Gandhian orthodoxy. His marriage is an instance in point. He married at an age when a close disciple of Gandhiji, as he is, will perhaps think of spending the rest of his natural life in meditation and single-blessedness. But he did not allow his natural human instinct to suffer repression because of a peculiar fad of Gandhiji's. Sucheta Devi was then a teacher of history at the Benares Hindu University. She was also, perhaps, at one time a pupil of Kripalaniji. They decided to marry and that was all that mattered to him. It was

a simple affair. Only a few friends were invited at very short notice by Mrs Pandit. And as we were waiting in the drawing room of Anand Bhawan to welcome the new couple, Kripalaniji arrived first and, almost blushing, said to Jawaharlalji, 'Why don't you now tell them that it was all a huge joke?' A few minutes after Sucheta Devi appeared accompanied by her brother and received the blessings of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's mother. It is since then that I have come to know the Kripalanis intimately.

This was perhaps in 1936—and since then I have had many occasions to meet them on a strictly social plane. It was in this setting that I could study Kripalaniji as a man who is always natural, devoid of all humbug, one who has never forgotten that he is an ordinary human being and not a spiritual leader, and that a healthy existence requires a natural living. Keeping intact within himself the basic principles of Gandhian philosophy he leads a full life and relishes as much the dainty viands of a luxurious table (both vegetarian and non-vegetarian) as he would the sparing diet of a jail. He enjoys smoking and has often smoked cigars with me with great enjoyment; and knowing my partiality for cigars he has kept them at his own place. In his domestic life, as well as in his political preoccupations, he is ably assisted by his talented wife who has many a time regaled us with delicacies.

This romantic touch to what might easily have been a humdrum existence gives to Kripalanijis mental make-up a humorous side. By nature and temperament he is humorous. I recall an instance when Minoo Masani was staying with us. Kripalaniji and Sucheta Devi wanted us to have tea with them. For some reason Minoo Masani

could not accept the invitation. But Kripalaniji was not the man to take 'no' for an answer. Ram Manohar Lohia who was at that time staying with him at Swaraj Bhawan was unwell. At 5 in the afternoon Kripalaniji telephoned Masani that Ram Manohar had suddenly taken a turn for the worse, and that we should hurry to see him. The way he said it all was so dramatic, that we were taken in by his bluff. When we reached there we were astonished to see Kripalaniji laughing heartily at the doorstep pointing towards Ram Manohar who was as well as could be expected after the fever had left.

There you have the picture of a refreshingly delightful man—great in many ways and yet free from some of the peculiar idiosyncracies of great men. Independent in thought and action, his individualism is not an irritating spectacle of caprice or arrogance but a bold and original expression of his simple personality. His life lived fully is not made up of luxurious habits. In manner as in dress he is a very simple man who, you would feel, has just come out from amongst the dumb millions whom he hates for their abject fatalism. Strong in principle and stronger in his convictions, he has the discreet wisdom of a statesman, without being a 'limelight' politician. Take him all in all, you would never know that he was for years the General Secretary of the A.-I. C. C. He is simple without being self-effacing—and if he abhors anything, it is publicity. Unkempt, with his long hair dropping almost on his shoulders in a kind of a bob, he looks a model of Grecian art, though he is essentially a son of the soil.

OUR DADA

By DHIRENDRA MAJUMDAR

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, when the Non-co-operation movement was at its height, Gandhiji had called for the boycott of schools, colleges and law courts. The student community was also stirred by the battle-cry. Thousands of young men gave up their studies and joined the national movement. I was then a student of the Engineering College of the Hindu University, and I, too, was affected by Gandhiji's call. I gave up my studies along with some other friends. The question was what to do and where to go. We looked to the late C. R. Das for guidance. As a Bengali it was very natural for me to look to him. In those days Gandhiji had inaugurated the Kashi Vidyapith as a centre of national education in Benares. We all decided first to go to the Vidyapith and see what it was like. At the Vidyapith, the first man we encountered was a lean, lanky and strange-looking fellow—his hair dishevelled, a pointed parrot-like nose, and small, but piercing eyes. We were attracted towards him at the very outset. We decided amongst ourselves that if we were to learn anything we should not leave that man. Four of my friends went to Bengal, but three of us joined the Vidyapith. We brought our luggage to the Vidyapith and he befriended us as if we were old friends. We were accommodated and we settled down in the Vidyapith.

We used to call him 'Professor' in those days. He was a professor in the University, but had left the job during the Non-co-operation days. We saw that the students were loyal to him. We were all young men. Gandhiji had assured us that Swaraj would be achieved in a year's time. We had left the college in the hope that we would achieve independence in a year. In sheer impatience, we used to ask our Professor (Kripalaniji) as to what our programme was. He used to reply with great confidence, 'What's the necessity of a programme now? You have non-co-operated with the satanic government and if now the country needs you, the programme will be before you soon. Do not worry and be confident.' Whenever we used to put such disconcerting questions to him he used to answer in his usual way. Sometimes we used to admire his confidence and detachment, but, at times, they used to bother us too. But on the whole, he tremendously impressed us all. This is the reason why so many of us wanted to be like him and tried not to bother ourselves unnecessarily. Slowly we began to call the Professor our 'Dada' (elder brother).

Today our Dada is our Rashtrapati. For twelve years he was the General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee. Today he is the leader of the nation. I am reminded of the words he used to say twenty-five years ago, 'Do not worry, and do your duty. When the country will need your services, you will get the programme.'

For the last twenty-five years we have watched our Dada. I have seen him cooking meals in the Ashram, chopping wood for fuel, watering the garden and his numerous other activities. When we used to take the

vegetables to the market for selling, he used to pull the 'thela' through the streets of Benares, joking all the while with the passers-by. Some of his colleagues had become by then 'big leaders'. They used to taunt him. 'Kripalani! What is this madness? Why should you think that you and these university students are meant to waste their lives on these small jobs?' He used to reply with nonchalance, 'You people have become "great men"; you are doing all the big work and the country will "naturally" prosper. If my companions and I devote our lives to these small jobs, the country would not suffer at all; because you people are looking after the country's problems. Leave us alone.' He taught us not to consider any job too low and whatever we do we should do it with pleasure.

After some time he left us and went to Gujerat to take charge of the Vidyapith there under the orders of Bapu. There too he was his old self—utterly indifferent to the world. His advice to the young was, 'Do your duty and do not bother about the world.'

After he had put the Gujerat Vidyapith on a sound setting, Bapu sent him back to the U. P. once more to organize the Constructive Work programme. His old habits still persisted, the same neglect of the world and the same unobtrusive work without desiring any publicity. We were greatly impressed by it.

The movements of 1930 and '32 made the Congress a very powerful organization. Its prestige was very high. There was great national consciousness in the country. The work of the A.-I.C.C. had also increased. The Congress needed a man who could devote all his time and energies to the office and organizational work of the

Congress and Kripalaniji was chosen for the job by the leaders of the nation. The nation wanted him and our Dada was sent for. He did not care for office. The only thing that he cared for was his work. The nation knows full well with what success and ability he strengthened the organization of the Congress and maintained strict discipline.

The country progressed still further. The Congress became more powerful and met the challenge of the British imperialism in 1942. The British Government realized its mistake and it seemed that we had almost broken the bonds of slavery. At this hour we needed a man who could bring successfully the ship of the nation to port. Again the same man has been called to take charge of the nation, whose aim has always been to do his duty fearlessly and courageously.

Today our Dada is Rashtrapati—the Dada who used to wash utensils with us and used to teach us how to work.

A DEVOTED GANDHI-ITE

By G. RAMACHANDRAN

IT was Miss Houssding, a German woman, who was then an inmate of the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati and who on seeing Shri J. B. Kripalani for the first time in 1926 asked me, 'Who is that man with that wild hair and the face of a Greek statue?' That was a good description of the head of the man. His head and face will strike you in any crowd. There is a distinction, an extraordinary sharpness added to something wild and untamed in his appearance. It is particularly true of him that his face is the index of his mind. There is nothing slow or dull about him. He is as acute as he is lively. His pet hobby is to tear people to tatters in a controversy. His tongue is sharp as a razor. There are those who would say he has a vile tongue. The truth is Kripalani is uncompromising in everything and his tongue is the instrument of his uncompromising head. He is one of India's bravest workers. Worker! Yes, not leader. He never sets up any claim to leadership. This is not due to any political or personal prudery. Prudery is not one of his virtues. He has really been a worker all through his life and he is more at home with those who do the actual work than those who talk about it. He is today the Worker-President of the Congress and I guess he is more proud that he is a worker than that he is the President. Kripalani's

courage is not merely the courage of a sharp intellect. It is the courage that comes from character. If you want to hear home truths about any matter or person of importance in India today you have only to talk to him for a few minutes. His Guru is undoubtedly Mahatma Gandhi. But it is his greatest delight to talk irreverently of his Guru and crack sharp jokes about him. Only, he seems to have the fantastic idea that he alone is entitled to criticize Gandhiji, for he would flare up if any one else dares to say even a word against the Guru in his presence.

Here is a typical story. He himself related it to me. He greatly enjoyed doing so. When he was in charge of the Gujerat Vidyapith, the late Shri Mahadev Desai once spoke to his students on the occasion of Gandhiji's birthday. Mahadev Bhai could, on such occasions, assume the solemnity of a Bishop. He did so on the occasion. He referred to the fact that Gandhiji was one of those who unfailingly revolutionized the lives of those who came in contact with him and as examples cited the instances of himself and of Kripalani. This at once incited the brilliant perversity of Kripalani, who as president of the meeting had the last word. He said that he was one of Gandhiji's earliest co-workers who had known him for many long years and yet the only thing he had changed in all those years was his shirt! Mahadev Bhai literally collapsed in his seat and many of the members of the Satyagraha Ashram who were present at the meeting turned red in the face and yet it was absolutely true that Gandhiji had revolutionized the life of Kripalani all right. The transition from a Professor to a village agitator, then to an outstanding constructive worker, to the General

Secretary of the Congress and finally to the Rashtrapati were all phases in that revolution. There is not in the whole Congress one who is a more loyal follower of Gandhiji than Kripalani.

Those who know Kripalani casually will be tempted to be repelled by the violence of the temper and language of this brilliant interpreter of non-violence. But what appears as violence of temper and words is really the revelation of a mind which knows no guile or reservation. Here is another illuminating story about him. Recently he was my guest in Madras where he came to settle the Madras Congress Ministry tangle. In the rush of his visitors was a friend of mine who calls himself a leader of the Backward Communities. He arrived fully dressed in European style. I took him up and introduced him to the Rashtrapati. The visitor began explaining to the President the pitiable condition of the Backward Communities and the urgent need for their uplift. Acharya Kripalani blazed up in a few minutes. What he said was something like this: 'Why do you call yourself a Backward Community man? You are dressed up in a grander style than I am and you look absolutely prosperous. You are neither a Dhobi nor a blacksmith nor a potter nor a man of the Hill-tribes. You are a fraud. I know I too am a fraud, in terms of the dumb millions of our country. Every one of us in India belongs to the Backward Community of political slaves. Why then do you set up special claims? You are simply exploiting poor people to set up as a leader. You think you can teach the Congress how to serve these people. Before you do so, climb down from your leadership and become a worker yourself.' There was much more in

the same style. My poor friend had to beat a hasty retreat.

Kripalani is at heart a Socialist. Nevertheless he dislikes most of the Socialists and most of the Socialists dislike him. His Socialism might be described as Satyagraha Socialism. It aims not at controlling capitalism but at destroying it, root and branch, by breaking it up into pieces through ruthless decentralization. In this, as in most other things, he stands in line with the ideas and methods of Gandhiji. His two books, *The Gandhian Way* and *Non-violent Revolution* are among the best interpretations of all that is dynamic in the thought and work of Gandhiji. Kripalani has always taken Gandhiji and his work at their most revolutionary curves. That is why he is one of the very few colleagues of Gandhiji who can carry conviction to the students and to the youth of the land. The Gandhian Constructive Programme is for Kripalani the only revolutionary programme before the country. Every forward step in the working of that programme is for him one more step of Swaraj achieved. Gandhiji's words that the Constructive Programme is not merely the way to Swaraj but Swaraj itself is literally true for Kripalani. That is why he is the first President of the Congress who has ever cared to call together a meeting of Congress Political leaders and Constructive workers. The recent Allahabad Conference of the Presidents and Secretaries of Provincial Congress Committees and important Constructive workers which he called is bound to be a landmark in our present history. The recommendations of this Conference which the Working Committee later generally accepted and which are now being implemented will

help greatly in bridging the gulf between political and constructive workers in the country. In the last fifteen or twenty years political and constructive workers had separated as two castes altogether without any real contact between the two. This separation had weakened both our politics and our constructive work. There are numerous people in the country who look up to Acharya Kripalani to make the year of his Presidentship one of all round constructive work in every province.

In politics Kripalani is an extremist. He has no faith that the present Constituent Assembly will result in India's independence. He has no faith that the British will really help India to achieve complete independence. His remedy is to organize the masses through constructive work and when necessary through Satyagraha to manage their own affairs and to evolve the power to do so. In politics Kripalani has absolutely no personal ambitions except to remain a free lance to prick Ministers and all those who believe in compromises. While he was in Madras recently, he absolutely refused to be drawn into any intrigue to set up this or that person in the Ministry. When a pressman asked him if he had selected the Ministers from a panel given to him, his answer was, 'I am not the Public Services Commission.' When the question was repeated in another form, he retorted, 'Luckily, I have not married in Madras, but in Bengal and I have no brother-in-law to provide for.' Throughout his recent stay in Madras his one passion was to keep the honour and the prestige of the Congress unsullied in the midst of intrigues and counter-intrigues. In this he succeeded greatly. Even those outside the Congress testified to this.

Kripalani has a rare sense of humour. It is rare for more than one reason. It is a peculiar Kripalani brand. It is often so cutting that it makes one weep than laugh. Not always though. While in Madras the Yuvaraja of Pithapuram and the Yuvarani came to invite him to a garden party which they proposed to hold in his honour and to which they desired to invite most of the prominent people of the city. He quietly asked them what the entertainment would cost. He was told it would cost a thousand rupees. He said, 'I am a poor man. Why throw away so much money on me for a show? You please give me a cheque for Rs. 1,000 and I will use it for some good work for the people.' The Yuvaraja and the Yuvarani rose to the occasion and produced the cheque. Gallant Kripalani picked up a rose garland which somebody had given him and ceremoniously offered it to the Yuvarani saying, 'It is now my duty to entertain you.' He then asked for three glasses of coffee, handing two of them to the Yuvaraja and the Yuvarani. He applied the same technique to others who invited him to parties and dinners and when he returned from Madras he took with him quite a few thousand rupees which he had extracted in this style.

Kripalani is quite a good ladies' man. He treats women with high courtesy and charming banter. He can make a woman quite giddy with his compliments. He can rag them too very successfully. He is fond of little children and can play with them with abandon. He is not an ascetic at all and he is most certainly not a saint. He is, however, honesty itself and his honesty is that of a man of the world. He is not and cannot be a very popular

man. He is too honest and outspoken to be very popular. But those who know him well will and must value him greatly. Honour is his religion and courage his motto. What the future holds for him no one can foretell. His greatest contribution to Indian politics is and will be his relentlessly truthful though very bitter criticism of men and affairs. He is today and he will continue to be the best human prophylactic in Congress politics.

A MAN OF FAITH

By RAMADHAR

YOUR first reaction, perhaps, would be to get away from him! He would either remain indifferent or cast a strangely suspicious look at you which might make you feel uneasy with him! But never mind! it is not Dada, the big brother, it is not Kripalani either. It is the cynic in him which is an insignificant part of his personality. If you shrink from this cynical indifference and his rough and dry exterior, and leave him feeling unhappy and disappointed, you will lose contact with one of the rare specimens of humankind. Dada is Dada. His Dadahood is universal in kind. It is an Indian version of widest possible sympathy for man. So be careful. Try to see beneath the surface: probe the real man within. This is not easy, but have patience, and if you persist you will have one of the richest experiences of your life, I assure you!

Within his rough, lean and thin, but well-built human figure, lie buried very deep and noble emotions of peculiarly lasting character. They make him essentially emotional and his general outlook is usually very much influenced by them. This is the secret of his unswerving loyalty to the Mahatma. His attitude in this respect is that of a Hindu wife, and he never conceals it. This should not offend those who admire him for his intellectual

powers. He has the latter in abundance and makes an admirable use of them. But the man is above them. He is not swayed by them. He is their master and wields them with the greatest advantage to the cause he has elected to serve. His loyalty thus stands on a higher level than his intellect. It is with him a spiritual principle and his intellect, howsoever great in itself, must serve his loyalty.

This has led to a rare harmony in him of mind and heart. He is very methodical in his thinking. He places first things first and never minces matters. There is hardly any confusion of thought in him. This is not due to his superior intellect, but to the harmonious blending of heart and intellect. We come across very fine intellects in our universities, but most of them possess distorted and disfigured personalities. Their learning swells their intellects and makes them lopsided. They carry discord and dissonance within them which upset their balance. Not so Dada. He has balance. Not that he has no internal conflicts and doubts. They never cease in an aspiring soul. Even Gandhiji has them. Search implies conflict and doubt. But they do not disturb the integral and balanced development of the man enjoying the necessary synthesis of mind and heart. Such a synthesis accentuates the intensity of the search. So Dada, being a seeker and possessing the required harmony of mind and heart, is growing. This is apart from the position he occupies today.

I sometimes feel inclined to believe that he is a Bhakta. One finds no signs of it outwardly. But inwardly, he probably has the psychic experiences of a man of Bhakti.

I remember a few occasions when he was speaking either of Gandhiji or the Buddha or the Christ. The mere mention of these names transported him to another world from where he appeared to draw his vision and inspiration. Those, who had the good fortune of being present at the welcome he extended on behalf of the Nation to the Chinese Goodwill Mission at Allahabad, a few years back, will acknowledge the truth of it. At this auspicious moment he rose to tremendous heights of wisdom and piety. The whole audience felt as though raised to a higher level. The Buddha, the great master, had touched him! This kind of ecstatic flow of spiritual fervour is possible only to a man of devotion.

Then he brings a detached or rather non-attached view of things to bear on life and its problems. This is the reason for his reputation as one of the sharpest brains in the Gandhian camp. His non-attachment is never the result of a mere intellectual comprehension of life and things. It has its origin in the profound depths of his soul. Non-attachment, discrimination and discernment do not belong to the domain of intellect. They leave it far behind and have their roots in personality. So, Dada is much more than an intellectual—he is a man of faith. And with faith he unites action, which is a rare combination. If an element of indifference had not been there to mar the effect of such a combination he would have become irresistible. Nature, however, has its laws. She has no place for more than one Gandhi in her scheme of things!

He is capable of very deep affection. He is bound to many by ties of deepest love and friendship. To know

him beneath the surface is to love him. In his affection, however, he is never influenced by the spirit of give and take, which, to his mind, amounts to bargaining. If he loves a person he loves him, expecting nothing in return. So his attitude to a person hardly undergoes a change whether the person leaves him or remains with him. His loyalty remains unchanged. He cannot give up anybody once he has accepted him. This does not mean that he makes a fetish of those he likes. He is not demonstrative in his affections and so people are hardly aware of the existence in him of any affection for them. This is quite characteristic of him.

But, peculiarly enough, in the Ashram, of which he is the founder and the principal architect, he is more feared and respected than loved, and he appears to enjoy the fun of it! One may almost say that he even likes it. There are only a few of his old workers who have the necessary courage and confidence to speak to him without hesitation or fear. And among these elects only one has the audacity to take liberties with him with impunity! He, however, loves his Ashram people with the tenderness of a father. He gets immense relief from his hard work, when he is able to take off a day or two and spend this time with his children—the Ashramites. I once heard him remark to a visitor accompanying him, 'This is my little kingdom.' And so it is. In spite of the fact that the Ashram people fear and respect him more than they love him, they are somehow conscious of the great love he bears for them. So they are attached to him even though they keep at a respectful distance from him!

As a man, however, he has his vanities and limitations. He is proud of his detachment and consistency. He, perhaps, thinks he is very logical. I have already spoken of these qualities in him. He is detached, consistent and logical, no doubt, but not always! We have seen he is essentially emotional. Such a disposition sets a certain limit to the qualities of his head. This limit can be overcome only by progressive development of one's spiritual personality. He is growing but his pride is an obstacle. It is however only a minor characteristic of him and its presence is also good, for, others have some chance to see him, as a man, with all his faults!

He is very well known for his fiery temper although he has cooled down greatly of late. (This cooling down is attributed to his marriage, although of this I have my doubts!) His temper is a family inheritance. The Kripalanis in Sind are famous for it. Dada, however, has a sense of proportion in this also. Even in the midst of the greatest excitement when he might appear to be absolutely beside himself, he knows where he stands and what the occasion is. He manages to keep himself within honourable limits. He even knows when to lose his temper and when not! Apart from this, his heart is never affected by his anger. Anger shakes his outer surface only and leaves his heart undisturbed. Nobody, however, can deny that his hot temper has been a handicap to him in his public life.

Being impulsive and a man of strong likes and dislikes the intensity and purity of his general outlook is sometimes coloured by prejudice against one thing or the other, or even against persons. But as usual such things do not affect him deeply.

According to some he is miserly! But he is equally magnanimous. He will rebuke you right and left for having spent four pice where, according to him, you should have spent three, but he will part with thousands without a moment's reflection when necessary.

Let us now see him in the political setting of our country. He is the President, Rashtrapati, the first citizen of the nation. He is in the seat of honour as by right of selfless service to his country for over a quarter of a century. He embodies in himself certain noble traditions and ideals which our nation has endeavoured to realize. He also represents some definite modern progressive trends in the social, economic and political life of other countries which have contributed much to the common welfare of humanity as a whole. He has the courage of a great warrior who knows how to give his life inch by inch. He has great organizing and administrative skill. All these qualities have been recognized and appreciated by his countrymen who have elevated him to the presidential *gaddi*. In fact these are the very qualities sorely needed today in almost every citizen. And yet he is, probably, not able to play his full role in shaping the destinies of this ancient land of ours, for, our great national organization is fast losing its dynamic character, and factions and groups are springing up which are engaged in advancing their own interests.

With his great qualities of detachment and discernment and with his organizing and administrative skill he can be one of the great pillars of free India as it passes through a period of transition. A man of character in the widest possible sense of the term he is incorruptible, and love of

power and glory cannot tempt him to deviate from what is good and just. Many a great man has dreamt of a State which will be run by the noblest elements in society. They have talked of philosopher-rulers! We have such men in every country and clime and yet they are never entrusted with the task of guiding the destinies of their countrymen. In India we have so far been fortunate in having the noblest men at the top in our public affairs. This has been so because public work involved hard labour and enormous sacrifices. But now when power is about to be transferred to us, the nature of our public life is fast changing, and undesirable people, relying on the baser elements of human nature such as selfishness, greed, fear and pride are raising their head. Merit is being ignored and other considerations are coming into play. Dada finds himself at bay in such a state of affairs. He is more inclined to seek a corner for himself than to plunge into the turmoil with self-seekers. So not wanting to be a party to the fray he may well retire or his claims be ignored. Such a contingency will mean the loss of a valuable source of strength and wisdom of which the country stands in dire need today.

‘DADA’ KRIPALANI

By N. R. MALKANI

I HAVE known Kripalaniji since the days of my nonage when I was a little school-boy. He was my neighbour and a distant relative. Later on, life threw us together as colleagues for several years—to the G. B. B. College, Muzaffarpur, and the Gujerat Mahavidyalaya, Ahmedabad. Since then we have met less frequently for our natures and our duties have led us to different destinations. I have remained the simple Prof. Malkani since 1914, but the *Jiwat* of my boyhood grew from ‘Prof.’ Kripalani to ‘Dada’ Kripalani and then into ‘Acharya’ Kripalani. Now he stands literally at the top as ‘President’ Kripalani though for many of us he shall ever remain nothing but dear ‘Dada’.

It is said that a man’s most insignificant trait of character is more important than the longest of his speeches and that a man’s spoken word is a surer testimonial than his written letter. Kripalani has made many speeches and written some books, but the man is more significant than either. A very short acquaintance tells you that he is one of nature’s mutations which belongs to no variety or species but out of whom varieties and species are evolved. Kripalaniji was born at Hyderabad in a remarkable Amil family of seven brothers and only one daughter, he being sixth in the scale. The father, Kaka Bhagwandas,

as a retired tahsildar was a loyal Indian but a staunch Vaishnava, who lived a simple and austere life in his cottage built in front of the pucca family house. He was respected both by his family and neighbours, but there was a large element of fear in that respect. For, with a venerable figure, he had a quick temper that spared no one and expressed itself in a vigorous dialect. The second and fifth brothers became converts to Islam and laid their lives at its altar. One died as an absconder during the Khilafat movement, and was believed to have intrigued with Afghanistan for the invasion of India. The other died in Turkey while defending it against the Greeks before the first Greek War. The third brother was the first Amil to open the first Swadeshi shop and the first leather shop at Hyderabad, Sind. The seventh became a mere carpenter and then suddenly put on the robe of a sanyasi, with so much fire in it and him, that Kripalaniji feared him if he feared anybody. The last was a daughter—Kikiben—dear to the whole family and now dedicated to the national cause, but a chip of the family bloc. It was a family of highly-strung individuals, with thin lips, pinched faces but alert eyes and warm hearts. All of them, I believe, slept very little, had sharp tongues, but strong likes and, of course, dislikes. And it was fundamentally a religious-minded family in a community which had or has little value for religion.

I came to know Kripalaniji when he had passed his Matric Examination with some labour and much luck—in fact he generally succeeded in passing his examinations by that nice combination—and had joined the Wilson College at Bombay. I clearly remember that evening

when on passing the first year examination he picked up his fat books on mathematics and flung them like rubbish outside the house with a horse-laugh and choice epithets. He disliked text-books and who could make love to Geometry and Trigonometry as taught in colleges? But I distinctly remember a large, spacious room with a row of almost all the English poets, framed and hung round the four walls with admiration. He doted on English poetry as much as he later hated the English rulers and their ways in India. And he read it with great emotion and a tear in his voice. Later on when we were at Muzaffarpur, both adventurer-professors of a sort, we would frequently wrestle on the lawn and then go up a tree to shout our famous 'baits' of Shah Abdul Latif—the greatest Sufi poet of Sind. The language sounded uncouth, the voice was wild but oh! the warmth and exuberance of youth that he and I poured out into those unmusical concerts! Our Behari students laughed and listened but could not help admiring our effusions. I think no one can achieve anything worthwhile without some poesy in his make-up. Kripalaniji has perhaps not composed a single couplet in his life but has a keen poetic sense in his composition. His writings and more so his speeches bear ample testimony to that.

I next remember him in short coats, silken trousers, and a big, thick 'danda' in his thin hands during his evening walks. Those were post-partition days when there was a ferment among students and Swadeshi shops were opened all over the country. Kripalaniji had raised a lot of trouble for Dr MacKickan of the Wilson College so that he had to migrate to the quieter atmosphere of the D. J.

Sind College, Karachi. Here, too, in an unfortunate moment, Principal Jackson once betrayed himself into saying, 'You Indians are contemptible liars,' in a students' general meeting. It was the year 1907 when Kripalaniji was in the B.A. class. There was a strike in which many of us participated and received our first lesson in patriotism. I believe it is since then that politics has run as a red thread through the life of Kripalaniji and he has been up 'against' the rock of British rule in India. It suited his nature which is always prepared for the fray. Those were days when he would attend public meetings with his 'danda' and a band of rowdy students to shout and howl down loyalist speakers, without scruples about so-called respectability. Later on he became a teacher in several schools and a professor in colleges and he will tell you with great gusto how he was ever a beloved of students and a terror to authorities. One would think that you could only love him or fear him and that there was no middle course left. Generally speaking, the young have always loved him and the elders, especially those in authority, have feared him. The old 'danda' has disappeared but the old fire has remained. In fact he thrives on opposition and seems to get the best out of his bellicose temper. The expression on his face is usually tense but there is almost a moral justification for it. The features of the face are by no means severe, for these can relax into delightful laughter, but the times are tense and the will to action has shaped the features to their high purpose.

I have been his colleague as a professor for about seven years, in Bihar and Gujerat. It was in Gujerat that he was

dubbed an Acharya and has remained known as such. He was teaching English and History not as a learned professor stuffed with the knowledge of books. In fact there was or is nothing bookish about the man. He has always smelt of the woods, never of libraries and reading rooms. He is ever fresh, vigorous and spicy, never dull, much less insipid. In the class room and outside he would convince you less by his facts than by their presentation. He will create for you an atmosphere that is stimulating or may be irritating. In fact you never can tell what is coming next and in what manner. You can only rest assured that he will give you 'something' that is unusual and even unique. Generally speaking, he is more fond of analogies and illustrations than bare arguments and where the latter are advanced they will not be wrapped up in a cloud of phraseology, but in a direct and forthright manner whose directness tells. Now and then these arguments are matched by his humour that is neither subtle nor even pleasant, but is savoury or pungent according to the occasion or his mood. It is said that he would rather lose a friend than miss a joke. But I think his wit has won him more friends than he has lost. He speaks better than he writes and talks best when he has a fair or a sympathetic audience. Now and then he is even brilliant and smothers you and your voice by a torrent of arguments, sarcasm and ready reply.

But most of us will always know him as 'Dada' Kripalani. I wonder who first made love to him by that intimate appellation. I believe it was one Ram Binode Singh of G. B. B. College. This word describes him as nothing

else does. He is your 'Elder' brother—not a professor or an Acharya or, if you will, a President. He loves and chastises like an elder brother and he is more willing to brother you than father or grandfather you. Young or old students have always flocked round him and he has made love to them with readiness. When young he had a knack for having boy 'beloveds' and now that he is older he is more generous and has both boy and girl beloveds. He is never more happy than when they gather round him and he chaffs them in his charming Bohemian manner. He has such beloveds in Bihar, Gujerat and the U.P. and feels always at home with them. Kripalaniji is not much of a linguist and talks poor Gujerati and an irregular Hindi after his thirty years' stay. But it is a language of love and fun that charms the listeners. He is perhaps a systematic worker and probably an efficient organizer but he is certainly a fine captain of a fine band of loyal workers. It is strange but true that although born in Sind he has never taken kindly to the province or its people. There is something in the Sindhi get-up against which his being rebels. He dislikes its expensive and coarse imitation of the West, its materialism and attendant snobbery, its lack of political or religious enthusiasm and when he comes he cannot resist the temptation of exposing all our humbugs and hypocrites and putting to ridicule our foreign hats and vulgar make-up. I once remember his undertaking to introduce some of our leading men to Gandhiji during one of his visits to Sind. He talked in his usual devastating style in the midst of bursts of laughter. But I do not think most of us would relish such a style on such an occasion.

Prof. Kripalani joined Gandhiji in 1917 during the good old days when he first visited Champaran to espouse the cause of kisans. It was a time when Bengal terrorists were abroad and had then congregated in Bihar. The cult was fast becoming the cult of all young patriots. We then took it as little ones catch measles, and as young people subsequently took up Socialism or Communism. It was not their fault or even special virtue but a necessity arising out of the prevailing times. Kripalaniji accepted terrorism with as much enthusiasm as Jayaprakash Narayan later imbibed Socialism. New values arise with changing times. But as all streams flow into the river and all rivers fall into the ocean so have all values been summed up by Gandhism and all forces harnessed by Gandhiji. He is the greatest peaceful revolutionary of all times. Kripalaniji began his political life with faith in the creed of violence and I believe would have long ago paid the full price for holding that dangerous creed. Gandhiji himself has told us by what circuitous and devious ways he has come to adopt the new faith but in his own style. He is personally devoted to that great old man and will take up cudgels on his behalf against one and all. In fact, he is the knight-errant of the Working Committee and the majority party of the Congress, giving and taking blows as part of the day's game. But he is no tame or silent or sullen follower of his Master. I think he is second to none in the royal camp for telling straight and even unpleasant truths to the Master if need be. Often enough he gratuitously pleads the cause of others more timid or reticent or discreet than he. Nor is he exactly a Gandhi-ite in the

Gandhian sense and probably loves the man Gandhi more than the creed known as Gandhism. And if among his followers, Gandhiji has Leftists and Centrists and Rightists then Kripalaniji emphatically was and has remained the Leftist. It is true that Gandhiji has many followers who have adopted his creed. It is equally true that the followers of a great man soon reduce the living Master to a dead idol. Kripalaniji is live enough to keep the Master living even after his death.

A FAITHFUL SOLDIER

By ANIL K. CHANDA

It has been said and not without justice either, that on the score of his looks alone, Acharya J. B. Kripalani would find ready admittance into any anarchist group anywhere in this wide world. And if by any chance his face failed him, I may add that his tongue would secure the necessary passport. To use very modern terminology, the Acharya carries an atom-bomb in his tongue. But we should not forget that Acharya Kripalani is a product of the 'wild west', where ex-premiers are shot dead on the king's highway in the middle of the day and ministers in office tried on charges of man-slaughter. Mollycoddles are not bred and reared in the deserts of Sind.

But age and Sevagram have considerably tempered him; an eminent Socialist friend the other day went even to the length of referring to him as an extinct volcano. Even a cursory perusal of his recent Bombay speeches, however, would convince any one that it was merely wishful thinking on the part of the Socialists. We thank God that Kripalaniji remains as colourful as before, even though his wild revolutionary locks are gone—the first matrimonial tribute to his greatly talented Bengali wife, Sucheta.

Jiwatram Bhagwandas Kripalani was born in a moderately well-to-do Amil family of Hyderabad, Sind, nearly

sixty years ago. The Amils are the great Bhadralog community of Sind; if he had remained true to the traditions of his clan, he would have been a pensioned-off district magistrate today and possibly a Rai Bahadur as well. But he is a born rebel. He proved intractable even in his college days and he had to peregrinate from college to college before he could qualify for the Master's Degree in History from the University of Bombay.

An inter-provincial political C.I.D. was evidently not very efficiently organized in those days and, for a time, Acharya Kripalani could serve as a professor in a government college in Bihar. It is said that at this period of his life he got into touch with the young revolutionary groups in Bengal, but the Government soon got the scent of things and his services in the college were peremptorily dispensed with. Gandhiji was then in the midst of Champaran Satyagraha struggle and one of the first to join his standard was the young professor Kripalani. (It is interesting to add that Mahatmaji still addresses him as professor.) The iconoclast at long last had found his God and, over this long period of thirty years, the Acharya has known no other loyalties or affiliations. He is one of the most faithful of Gandhi-ites as well as one of the earliest.

After his work at Champaran had been over, Kripalani served for a while as Professor of History in the newly-started Benares Hindu University, but he was not happy there. The Non-co-operation movement came and carried him off in its tidal wave. Along with Acharya Narendra Dev, Babu Shriprakasa and several other friends, he organized the Kashi Vidyapith so munificently financed by that great patriot, Babu Sheoprasad Gupta and as he was

quietly settling down there as a teacher, he received Gandhiji's call to take up the direction of the newly-started Gujerat Vidyapith at Sabarmati. Needless to say it was with alacrity that he rushed to his new job, but he was not destined to remain long even there. He had growing difficulties with the bosses of the provincial Congress about the administration of the Vidyapith. Too loyal to revolt and too unbending to yield, he resigned his principalship,—it is here that he got to be known as Acharya—and shifted to the U. P. where he took up the khadi work with all the tumultuous energy of his restless spirit. In Meerut he organized one of the greatest khadi centres in the whole country and if once again he is freed from the trammels of office, it can safely be prophesied that he will rush back to his Ashram to take up the khadi work, for he is one of those who sincerely believe that in charkha lies the salvation of the country.

A comparatively unknown man in high politics except amongst the very elect, he was appointed the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress in 1934 with a seat on the Working Committee and since then he has continued holding that high and responsible office year after year. In fact, he seems today indispensable. Till he took over charge, the Congress had hardly an office worth the name and it was given to him to create the central secretariate in the place of the peripatetic camp office, moving from here to there every year, like that of minor political parties.

Without being very bookish, he has the soul of a scholar in him; he can go straight to the core of an intellectual problem and he can express the toughest of propositions

in the most direct and convincing manner. I know of no better exposition of Gandhian politics and economics than his collection of articles on the subject published some time ago under the title of *The Gandhian Way*. And the most readable treatise on Basic Education is also from the pen of this educationalist. He has hardly a peer in the realm of purely polemical pamphleteering.

There is no wittier person in the whole Congress camp than this battle-scarred warrior; his jokes are rare pieces of art though he is killingly sarcastic on the public platform. At the lamentable A.-I. C. C. meeting in Calcutta when the then Rashtrapati Subhas Chandra Bose tendered his resignation as President and names were being suggested and discussed for the filling up of the vacancy, a Bengal delegate proposed the Acharya's name,—it may safely be assumed more for fun or spite than for serious consideration. The Acharya stood up and in grave tones declined the proffered honour, but added *sotto voce* that it was another instance of Bengal's innate parochialism, 'If it is not the son of Bengal, well, at least a son-in-law of Bengal should be the President.' It has been said that he would sacrifice even his best friend for the sake of a joke and it cannot be denied that this trait of his character has cost him dear in his public life.

Acharya Kripalani is an indefatigable worker and his gaunt lanky figure seems capable of any physical hardship. He hardly knows any illness and it is rather characteristic of him that he was practically the only one of the Working Committee to have come out of the Bastille at Ahmadnagar without having shed even a pound of avoirdupois. During the entire period of his captivity

he maintained a complete *status quo ante bellum* attitude both in body and mind.

Kripalani is neither a politician nor a statesman. He is a pure and simple soldier in the nation's war of liberation. It is not for him to reason why, it is for him to do as bidden and die if necessary. He does not wait upon circumstances and he knows no equivocation. He knows his path and he knows his guide and does not worry about anything else. Such complete surrender to the leader is rather rare these days.

He has now long been on the stage for the public not to have formed its own picture of him and I am fully aware that, at least in this part of the country, the picture is not a very flattering one for him. And yet there could hardly ever be a more egregious injustice done to a public man than to think of Kripalani as a cynical Mephistopheles or a cunning intriguer with a scorching, vituperative tongue. I know of no softer heart than his; earthly possessions he has hardly any and what little he has is for all to share. He is neither a jester in cap and bells, nor a cruel vindictive hangman. But he is fanatic and there is a sleepless fury in him that raises perpetually a tornado around him. And in the ensuing dust the real man is often lost.

ST. PAUL OF GANDHISM

By C. K. NARAYANASWAMI

THIRTY years ago a young man of twenty-eight threw off his short coat, silken trousers and his big 'danda' and lined up in the struggle for Indian independence.

He was already a professor in a Government College in Bihar. But he had nurtured in the bosom of his innermost consciousness an insult a British professor had offered while he was a student. The Englishman had said: 'You Indians are contemptible liars.'

The insult offered by the British professor developed as a festering sore inside the student. That sore, perhaps, laid the foundation of his patriotism and the spirit of the crusader. This student and subsequent professor is none other than Acharya Kripalani.

Thirty years ago he kicked the professorial chair and joined Mahatma Gandhi to fight for the indigo workers of Champaran. And during these long years he has remained with the Mahatma and in the front rank of our fighters for freedom. In the Mahatma he discerned the prophet of a new era and a new age. In him he abided and posterity might exclaim: 'Kripalani was to Gandhi what St. Paul was to Christ.'

Gandhiji's *Young India* of 16th January, 1926, contained the following reference to Acharya Kripalani: 'Originally a teacher and a professor, Acharya Kripalani threw

himself into the fray, as soon as an opportunity offered itself in Bihar in 1917. The zeal with which he took the lead in giving Gandhiji the first welcome in Champaran cost him his comfortable job in the Government College at Muzaffarpur and ever since he has been in one or other national movement. After Champaran came a brief, brilliant career at the Hindu University, Benares, which came to a glorious end in the N.C.O. days, when he left the University with a large batch of students. He later helped in organizing the Kashi Vidyapith, but gave his time and energy to building on a nucleous of a few of his students the Gandhi Ashram at Benares.

'Then came the great days of 1921 which saw every important man in the U. P. in jail and Kripalani had also his share of the glory. On release from jail he set out putting his Ashram on a firm and solid footing, but the Gujerat Vidyapith needed him and he came away leaving his work in charge of his students who had now become his co-workers..... After five and a half years of service as Acharya of the Mahavidyalaya he has gone back into the arms of his old love. Benares' gain is Gujerat's loss.'

A fellow-professor of his who has had many duels with him on points of difference could not but own Kripalani's 'great qualities as a teacher' and acknowledge 'his manly courage, his patriotism, his austere simplicity,—above all his sagacity and political sense'.

Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who for long years has been Kripalaniji's colleague in the Congress Working Committee and who spent three years with him in the Ahmadnagar Fort, sums up his impressions of the man thus: 'The Professor with a Professor's proverbial absent-

mindedness, coupled with a keen grasp of the realities around him; with his deep insight into the nature of men and matters; his genuine kindliness of spirit masked by a rough exterior; his unfailing courtesies covered by his unconventional aberrations; his deep religious longing hidden behind his heretical looks and talks; above all his Sindhi Hindu's business talents which have built up the largest single khaddar organization in India by individual effort, least suspected because of his external don't-care-mannerism; his insight into philosophy, psychology and educational theories.'

This estimation of Kripalani reveals the complex personality of the new President of the Congress and has won for him the dubious, yet endearing, title of 'Dada'. 'Dada' in ordinary parlance is associated with a not very happy set of men; but in its simple connotation it means 'elder brother'. His exterior and don't-care-mannerism, his dash and flashing eyes and dishevelled hair may give the appearance of a political 'rough' and certainly he can 'rough it out'. He is possessed of a strange spirit of adventure and romance and has something of the traditional Roman about his bearing and posture. Brilliant as a conversationalist, he leaves a vivid stamp of his individuality in whatever company he happens to be. He is outspoken and excels in candid criticism.

In political controversy he believes in the theory that 'offence is the best defence' and on important occasions he wins by satire and sarcasm where he cannot controvert with reason and fact. If he can throw a whole company into side-splitting laughter with his sparkling humour, he can with equal success leave his opponents

withering at the effect of his sallies which are often not so pleasant. As one of his old friends, a fellow-professor, said: 'He is ever fresh, vigorous and spicy; never dull much less insipid. He could convince you less by his facts than by their presentation. He will create for you an atmosphere that is stimulating or, may be, irritating. In fact you never can tell what is coming next and in what manner.' He smothers you and your voice by a torrent of arguments, sarcasm and ready repartee. And what a voice is Kripalani's, rich and resounding, there is a gurgle in it. In sound it is a compromise between the guttural and the nasal and is pleasing to hear. He can be a success as a speaker through the mike and were he an actor, he would make a stage hit through his voice.

Acharya J. B. Kripalani was born in Hyderabad (Sind) in the year 1888. He was sixth of seven brothers. His father was a Tahsildar and the Acharya has inherited his austerity. It was a strange family of 'highly-strung individuals' and their unity was in diversity. Two of the brothers embraced Islam. One died as an absconder in the Khilafat movement, while the other laid down his life fighting for the Turks against the Greeks. But J. B. Kripalani, though he has inherited some of that independence and adventurous spirit, has managed to keep his nerves and equanimity of temper. He is, however, explosive.

Kripalaniji was never bookish, and this seeming disability or disqualification, however, has saved him from being unworldly or theoretical. The book of life—of experience and intercourse with society and social movements,—is greater than all the text-books with their maxims

and dogmas. The professor who draws his subjects from such a book and builds his lessons on them has a greater attraction for pupils than 'savants of the "mug-up" theory'. No wonder, therefore, Kripalani is the favourite of the students and instils into them confidence and a catholicity of outlook. Yet, he is a scholar with a flair for philosophy and is endowed with sturdy commonsense and keen business habits. This happy combination of the high and of the matter-of-fact world has invested Kripalani with an unindividual individualism, which is free from narrow possessiveness. He can be utterly detached even in his attachments.

Other qualities which distinguish him from many others are that ever-joyful attitude he maintains in most painful and trying circumstances and his capacity to laugh at himself. Let Kripalani speak himself. In his parting advice to the students of the Gujerat Vidyapith, he said: 'I charge you to keep the mirth and joy that is the privilege of youth. Remember, however heavy the burdens that life imposes, they are yet light. Dismiss with a smile the follies of others and, if you can, try to smile at your own. Wherever your lot may be cast, I assure you life is worth living even on the rack and the cross.'

Here is Kripalani self-revealed and therein lies the secret of his political health and success. His spirit is revealed in the injunctions he enjoined on the students and can be summarized in two words: 'three silences'. He told them: 'I will not preach to you any copy-book maxims of morality. . . . . Keep the three silences we have always observed. First, silence in the prayer class which I have never entered but with a sense of joyful peace.

Second, silence at the first notes of music. Third, silence with which we listen to the most boring and unpopular speaker.'

Kripalani is attached to Gandhiji as very few are. It is still a debatable proposition whether he can ever be completely merged in him. Before he came under the influence of the Mahatma, he had accepted the cult of the terrorist. One would think that it came natural to him, for there is a tenseness in his make-up and the fire of the warrior and crusader ever burns in him. He keeps one in suspense as to his next move or step. In any case if he has changed and accepted non-violence, not as a policy, but as an article of faith, it certainly is not the non-violence of the meek and the coward.

There is a swing and a sweep in his movements which make it impossible to believe that he will not hit back if he is attacked. Yet it is true that he is true and loyal to the Master and is ever at his bidding. He may discuss and dispute with him, but will not cross the rubicon. If any one questions his choice, his ready retort is: 'Produce another. Is there a second?' Catholic in outlook and tastes, he can hardly be a conformist. Yet, he is the best interpreter of Gandhi and the Gandhian Way. 'There is something in Acharya Kripalani's way of thinking and writing which distinguishes him from others,' wrote Gandhiji. By challenging the neo-cult called 'Gandhism' he establishes the case for the Gandhian Way. 'There is as yet no such thing as Gandhism, but only a Gandhian Way and outlook which is neither rigid, nor formal, nor final,' he wrote.

Such 'heresy' has often landed him in some unpleasant situations and often brought him into conflict with

the Congress Right which seeks to fortify itself under 'Gandhism'. Particularly has this been the case since Socialist influence began to spread within the organization. He never changes his opinion to suit somebody else's convenience. Personal advantage or selfish advancement have never conditioned his approach to questions. Therefore, he is no respecter of persons.

Acharya Kripalani has the unique distinction of being the organizer of the largest single khadi centre by individual effort. It is the Gandhi Ashram at Meerut. Though ill at ease with dull, drab routine work, he has a great capacity for concentration, organization, and quick decision. He is free from parochialism. He makes his home wherever he goes and is quite at ease with every class of people. Though born a Sindhi, he became a Bihari when he settled down in that far-off province. Later on when he shifted to Benares he became a 'bhaiya' with equal ease. While Acharya of the Gujerat Vidyapith, he adapted himself to the Gujerati way of life. Writing about this characteristic of Kripalani in his reminiscences of the Champaran days, Gandhiji said: 'Though a Sindhi he was more Bihari than a born Bihari. I have seen only a few workers capable of merging themselves in the province of their adoption. Kripalani is one of those few. He made it impossible for anyone to feel that he belonged to a different province.' And of this he himself said: 'I had no intention of becoming a Gujerati. I was already a citizen of three provinces—Bihar, the U. P. and Sind. Even a more ambitious man than myself would have been satisfied with this. But how could the single atom of an individual resist the attraction of a great

province? . . . . The little service I rendered to you made me one of you. I believe, and my experience has confirmed me in the belief, that nothing draws men closer together than disinterested service.'

Prison is a leveller of men. It brings forth the best and worst in them. The dull routine and lack of variety and diversions affect the nervous system. Some develop insomnia. Others contract indigestion. Yet others become moody and spend their time counting the number of days to pass, or live in hope of early amnesty. None but the strongest and the dedicated could stand up and face the ordeal. Kripalani belongs to this latter category. His is an unconquerable spirit. He bends his head to no authority. He is unafraid.

It is said that in the course of one of these periods of imprisonment in a U. P. jail he evoked the displeasure and ire of the tinsel gods who seek to impose their will as the law of life and conduct in that little 'under-world'—and an Indian prison is nothing else. He was put in bar-fetters and hand-fetters and made to stand stripped for a whole week. The vindictive and wicked punishment produced no effect. It only roused his innate nature. He endured it, but never relented. Later, in the Ahmadnagar Fort, he displayed his intimate acquaintance with the culinary art, 'a least suspected virtue which helped to relieve the monotony of life and create fresh appetite in his friends by his labours in the pantry'.

Acharya Kripalani was elevated to the General Secretaryship of the Congress in 1934 and he has held that high office ever since. He has served under four Presidents and that is a marvel. A second to none, and a

leader in his own rights, he has shown great capacity to hold on to his own and yet discharge his duties. Such a task is not very easy and often becomes thankless. Any-one conversant with the inner story of the working of the Congress Secretariate and the Working Committee will tell you how often clashes and conflicts have arisen. That was inevitable. But he has an uncanny way of getting out of the bad holes. He has his point of view and ex-presses it with clarity and a devastating directness.

In his personal life Kripalani is a strange blending of the ascetic and the Bohemian. Long before he entered active public life, he had accepted voluntary poverty. Of this Gandhiji writes: 'I had known of him ever since my visit to Hyderabad. Dr Choitram had told me of his great sacrifice, of his simple life and of the Ashram that Dr Choitram was running out of the funds provided by Prof. Kripalani. He used to be a professor in the Govern-ment College, Muzaffarpur, and had just resigned his post when I went there..... He had no rooms of his own.' And he has ever remained without a room of his own. He lives where he works. He eats where food is offered to him.

He lives up to his own maxim: 'the ancient ideal of the poverty of the scholar and the teacher'. He used to tell his students: 'Ours is an aristocracy of learning wrap-ped in rags. But the rags are not unpleasant because they represent voluntary renunciation. It is poverty that does not impoverish, but enriches, ennobles and elevates.' Verily he is among the 'aristocracy of learning'. It is odd that a man wedded to such principles can at all be a Bohemian. But such is the fact of his personality.

Perhaps, it is his odd personality that has attracted young and old to him. His presence is ever infectious. He has his 'admirers' all over the country. Even as Gandhi is surrounded by young women and girls, so have I seen Kripalani chaperoned by ladies.

But he is attached only to one and that is Sucheta Kripalani, a highly accomplished woman who gave up a comfortable job to become the mate and comrade of this 'aristocrat of learning', this 'Prince among Paupers'. They live the life of the allegorical 'wandering Jew and Jewess'. The marriage created a sensation. There was a touch of romance about it. There are no two couples as attached to each other as the Kripalanis. Each makes love to his or her work and yet how forlorn they look when they are apart! Dr Pattabhi has referred to the 'Professor's proverbial absent-mindedness'. But he noticed this in the Ahmadnagar Fort. And Sucheta was not there! For, says Dr Pattabhi: 'Kripalani was not quite so happy in body as in mind. What little perturbation afflicted his mind and "mizaj" was set at rest on hearing from Sucheta.'

Some one once said that the Gandhi era in politics would close with the assumption of Governmental power by the Congress. If at this stage, therefore, leadership was left to a mere follower of the Master, he would, like several followers of the great man who have adopted his creed, reduce the living Master to a dead idol. But Kripalani is different. 'He is', as Prof. Malkani says, 'live enough to keep the Master living.' The author of *The Gandhian Way* is dynamic and the dynamics of Gandhiji's outlook will play a great part in influencing

and moulding the character of the great changes that are impending.

Christianity would have died on the cross with Christ but for St. Paul. If there is any such thing as 'Gandhism' Kripalani is its St. Paul.

'A POOR MAN IS CONGRESS PRESIDENT'

By N. V. THADANI

THERE are few events of greater political significance in the country than the election of the President of the Indian National Congress. The election is usually unanimous and there is but a single instance of a contest in the whole history of the movement. It is a unique honour bestowed upon a unique person—making him the first citizen of the country; and, for many years, the choice fell on eminent lawyers and elder statesmen, while the claims of large provinces were not ignored. But the whole outlook of the Congress has changed during the last thirty years; and service and sacrifice have taken the place of success in the field of Law or public affairs. The mantle has fallen this year on Acharya J. B. Kripalani; and the event is, in some sense, as significant of this change in the Congress as the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly in the political horizon of the world.

There are few persons interested in Indian affairs who have not heard of him as the General Secretary of the Congress for more than a decade; but there are not many who have heard him speak; he avoids publicity and his movements are seldom reported in the papers. He is a poor man who gave away all the little he had to serve a cause; and usually travelled third in crowded

compartments, and walked or went about in a tonga; and it is only in recent years that he has begun to travel second, and has availed himself of an occasional lift in the car of a personal friend. But those who knew him loved and trusted him to the end; so it was when he was a student or a college professor or Acharya of the Gujerat Vidyapith; and so it is still with him in the limited circle of his colleagues, co-workers and friends. It was for many years a tradition of the Congress that its General Secretary should be elevated to the Presidential chair before long; but Acharya Kripalani has broken this tradition too. He has been content to remain General Secretary for long, before being elected to the Presidential chair; and this is due as much to the events of the war as to his own shyness and indifference to limelight. His election at the present time is significant of a change in the values of things—that power, position, publicity and wealth must yield to character, humility, service and sacrifice in the end.

His shyness and humility do not imply any lack of self-confidence or strength; for there are few persons with more confidence in themselves and their ability. Yet he is more of a philosopher than a politician; and even more of an organizer than a theorist. While others talk of spinning and Khadi, he starts centres of production; and while they argue about schemes of basic education, he runs a school to make his experiments. While others speak, he acts; and yet, while many act, he begins to think—arriving, sometimes, at novel conclusions of his own. He is not afraid of the logic of his thoughts or of expressing them; and, both as a student and a young man,

was often dubbed an extremist and a revolutionary—for that is the lot of those who are not afraid to think and live up to their thoughts. While years have mellowed his mind and experience enriched his ideas, he still retains his buoyancy of spirit, and has preserved the appearance of middle age, if not of youth. His hair is still dark with but a trace of grey, and he can still walk a score of miles on a rough country road without exhaustion; and few would suspect that he is fifty-eight years of age. His mind is still fresh, and his vision clear; he can still argue with his earlier zest, and opposition only serves to increase his warmth of feeling and expression. He has a keen sense of humour, with a point sharp enough to pierce as well as to please. It has been observed that he can lose a friend, but not a joke; but he has never lost a friend worth having, and his pleasantries are often as pleasant as picturesque; and he can laugh most heartily at his own expense; for he is tolerant of everything save cant and casuistry. But it would be true to say that he would rather lose a friend than forgo a principle, and is not afraid to stand alone.

His great master is Mahatma Gandhi, who has made him what he is. The two came together in Bihar, thirty years ago, when young Kripalani was a lecturer in a college at Muzaffarpur, and Gandhiji, who had recently returned from South Africa, went to the succour of the poor labourers on the indigo estates in Champaran. Kripalani had the master as a guest in his house, and paid the price of the honour. He was asked by the authorities to resign and he did so with a smile. He had become a new man with a new vision of life—a willing

convert to the philosophy of Truth and Non-violence, which Gandhiji was putting into practice for the first time in India in those days; and he has never left the Master's fold. It is not that he has never had his differences or disagreements, but his submission is born of the conviction that the Master is right. 'What is the use of disagreeing with a man who has been tried and tested a hundred times,' he once observed to me, 'when every time you do so you find that it is you who have erred?'

So he writes and speaks about Gandhian philosophy and the Gandhian scheme of life, and wishes to work for Hindu-Muslim unity and to purify the Congress organization from within. He speaks the language of his Master, and shares with him even the odium of being styled anti-Hindu and anti-Muslim from time to time. But, like the Master who made him, he is a man, an Indian, and not a member of a caste or creed; and yet he has a deep religious Hindu background—devoted, sincere and a humble servant of man and god. Such is the man whom the country has chosen to be its leader for the year—a poor man, but a great patriot; simple and sincere, with a clear vision and clean life, an organizer and a man of ideas, a gentle friend, a generous opponent and a humble servant of humanity.

A RARE INTELLECTUAL

By P. D. TANDON

SEVERAL years ago, I casually asked Acharya Kripalani when he would be elected President of the Congress. He said that he never thought in those terms and added, 'I am not one of those who always feel and say that they have not received what they deserve. I think that life has treated me very kindly and I have got what is due to me. Presidentship of the Congress is a terrific responsibility, and I do not think one can have this honour without having great anxieties.' Now he has been elected President of the Congress and has got 'what is due to him'. After every presidential election, the President-elect of the Congress gets great receptions, rousing ovations, addresses of welcome, garlands and presidential processions at the Congress session. But it was a different story with Kripalaniji. Just after his election, Gandhiji told him that for him Presidentship of the Congress would not only be a crown of thorns, but a bed of thorns too. Gandhiji was more than right, and Kripalaniji has been having the most anxious and restless time since his election. He went to East Bengal and Bihar and was greeted with garlands of tears and shouts of misery. He did not get welcome addresses in those two provinces, but got silent addresses which narrated the anguish and sorrow of the people of Bengal. During the Meerut Congress session there was no

magnificent and princely procession for him, but quietly he went to the pandal to preside over one of the most momentous sessions of the Congress. The thing that hurt him the most was the absence of his Master there, whom he loves and adores. He missed his wise counsel in day to day proceedings of the Congress and, at times, even in that great gathering he felt a little lonely. But he is a man not to be depressed by the conspiracy of circumstances and carried on his job ably and confidently. Once he accepts a responsibility he holds to it unflinchingly and discharges his duty courageously.

Prārabhyate na khalu vighnabhayena nīcaih
Prārabhya vighnanihatā viramanti madhyāḥ
Vighnaih punaḥ punarapi pratihanyamānāḥ
Prārabdhamuttama guṇā na parityajanti

(Fear of obstacles deters the weak-minded
From risking an enterprise;
The mediocres having launched it,
When checked by reverse, pause midway;
But men of superior calibre are warmed,
Though, with obstacles, beset ever and anon
And to the task, once undertaken,
Hold unflinching.)

I have had the privilege of knowing Kripalaniji quite intimately for the last several years. On the very first day I met him I was greatly struck by his sharp intellect. It was a case of admiration at first sight. There is no humbug or hypocrisy about him. He lives and talks just as we do. He does not employ outwardly, ostentatious, and artificial methods to increase the stature of his personality, and impress people. It is now an open secret

that before the presidential election some persons carried on a malicious propaganda against him, questioned his competence for the presidential *gaddi,* and accused him of anti-Muslim bias. I can say without any hesitation that there are not many men in the Congress who can match him in ability. He wields a powerful pen and speaks with such fluency, vigour and ability that he can rouse the envy of the best of writers and speakers. Those who accuse him of anti-Muslim bias are the most offending souls alive and they do great injustice to Acharya Kripalani.

At first sight one is likely to be scared away by the Acharya's puissant, powerful and 'offensive' personality. At times, his words are like atom-bombs. Not even for a moment will he put up with humbug. He loves to be blunt and hates to hide his feelings. Recently, at Calcutta, a distinguished person came to Kripalaniji and repeatedly told him that Mr Suhrawardy was very sincere and was very keen to restore law and order in Noakhali, when Mr Suhrawardy was having a fine time at Darjeeling, and havoc had been let loose in East Bengal. Kripalaniji heard this cruel lie for a while, and then shrugged his shoulders in utter contempt for the visitor, and jeeringly said, 'My friend, I, too, am very sincere.' As he said this with a frown, the visitor sat quietly realizing his folly.

Kripalaniji is not easily impressed by people. Genuine merit and sincerity alone can impress him. People in this country have found out an easy and interesting way of serving India by living in America and London and China. These persons consider themselves great patriots. One day, a gentleman came to Kripalaniji and began to narrate his 'heroic services' in America for India. This

bore repeated continuously that he had fought great battles in America for India. This tired Kripalaniji's patience and, with a cynical smile, he said, 'Yes, Indians can serve India in America only.' This sentence fell like a bomb on this 'India's Champion in America' and soon he realized the folly of his silly talk and quietly cleared out.

Kripalaniji is a rare intellectual and a man of moods. He does not write for the sake of writing only. He takes to his pen when he is assailed by some brilliant and powerful ideas. Once he starts writing, he writes profusely and powerfully. Behind his writings you can always see a great intellectual at work. Once I asked him to write an article for a paper. He said, 'If you really want me to write a good article, you must rouse me. I cannot write simply because I have to write. I must strongly feel before I write. I can give out my best only when I am provoked.' And true—

> Jvalāti calitendhano agnirvipukṛtah pannagah phaṇo krarute.
> Prāyah svamahimānam kshobhāt pratipadhyate hi Janah.
>
> (Fire blazes up, when the fuel is stirred. The snake, when offended, expands its hood. For usually people attain their proper greatness through provocation.)

Kripalaniji is considered to be a 'blind' and most orthodox follower of Gandhiji. Once speaking in a big gathering the Acharya said, 'I am accused in some quarters for being a blind follower of the Mahatma. I wish to assure you that I have tried my best to resist him but found him irresistible. I have questioned him on many occasions, argued with him several times, differed with him most violently, but I must confess that he

always proved right and I wrong. Will you now like me to follow the great genius or not? It is a misfortune not to be a genius, but it is a greater misfortune not to follow the genius. I do not want to be doubly damned.' He is a great devotee of the Mahatma. He adores him as a genius and a great leader. He recently said, 'I know my old man better than others.' No doubt, he does. And Gandhiji, too, knows him well and greatly likes him.

Kripalaniji's interpretation of Gandhi and Gandhism is most original, refreshing and revolutionary. I do not think that many Leftists can take a more Leftist view on the needed occasions than Kripalaniji. He is not impatient to get power with many reservations and qualifications. He wants to wrest it from the unwilling hands on the right occasion. A friend of Kripalaniji told me that during the Cabinet Mission negotiations, he often used to say, 'We must not spoil our case with this Cabinet Mission. For impatience we shall have to pay heavily.'

A friend in Delhi banged me when I congratulated one leader (not Kripalani) on taking a firm stand on the question of including a nationalist Muslim in the Interim Government. He said, 'What the hell do you know about these things? It is Kripalani who did a great job on the occasion. Gandhiji was not willing to surrender on the question of nationalist Muslims, but the Working Committee thought it proper to temporarily yield on this point. Kripalaniji thought otherwise and revolted. He is reported to have resigned from the General Secretaryship with a bang and created a flutter. Gandhiji's keenness to have a nationalist Muslim in the Cabinet added much to his move. The Working Committee reconsidered

their decision and refused to yield on this vital matter.' As I heard this, I quietly bowed to Kripalaniji in deep admiration. If he had made it known to the public like a good propagandist, he would have been hailed as a great hero. Public sentiment on the question of inclusion of a nationalist Muslim in the Cabinet was so deep that it would have honoured Kripalaniji for his wisdom and courage in ways more than one. But he has no flair for publicity and does not care to know the trick of that trade.

If Kripalaniji had not come in contact with Gandhiji, he, too, like some of his other brothers, would have become a Sanyasi. The caves of Himalayas even now call him and he talks of them with great passion. If contact with Gandhiji stopped him from becoming a Sanyasi, marriage with Suchetadevi made him say a final goodbye to the life of a recluse. For many years, he lived the life of a Sanyasi without taking to Sanyas. His had been a life of austerity and simplicity. One winter morning, I saw him going towards the water tap with a *balti* in his hand. I rushed to him and tried to snatch the vessel from him and myself take the water upstairs. He refused to let me do the job and said, 'Youngman, do not make me feel old. I can assure you that even now I am stronger than you.' He filled the *balti* with water and speedily leapt up the ladder. I wonder, if I could have taken up that *balti*, full of water, so easily and so quickly. He used to cook his own food and wash his own clothes. Now his devoted wife Suchetadevi does not allow him to do any such thing. She has acquainted him with some home comforts and has sung a sweet song into his rather restless and bitter soul. When he was a professor

he used to get Rs. 250 per month, but took only Rs. 30 from it, and spent the rest on others.

Some people think that Kripalaniji is a heartless man. His sharp nose and broad, bitter grin seem to bite you as you approach him. But the man's exterior is utterly untrue to his interior. He is very human and warm-hearted. Once he likes you, he is all for you. Once he owns you he will never let you down, but will forgive you your mistakes. Once he believes you, he will never question you. In his student days he was liked by his many class-fellows. He would never take tea until he had some friends with him. This habit even now persists. He shows due respect to artists. In 1942 in Nainital, we went to a music party. The performance was over and I wanted to hurry back home. Kripalaniji pulled me up and said quietly, 'Do not be impatient. Don't you see that the artists have not yet left the meeting? Wait, we will go soon.'

Kripalaniji used to love loneliness and it suited his aloofish and retiring personality. But now, to a certain extent, he feels lonely when Suchetadevi is not at home; though he will not confess it. The Kripalanis—Sucheta, Nandita, Krishna and nephew Revo lived with him for some months as friends and comrades and Swaraj Bhawan used to rollick with laughter. Kripalaniji treats Krishna, Nandita and Revo as his own children, and they, too, greatly love him. Kripalaniji is being slowly tied down to affectionate relationship and it would now not be easy for him to get to his old ways without a pang. Kripalaniji ought to know that Sucheta, Nandita, Krishna and Revo have conspired against his love for solitude and Kripalaniji has been defeated.

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